SELECT NOVELS;

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CONTAINING

The BLIND BOY,

A FAIRY TALE;

INDIAN LETTERS,

AND

The DISTRESSED ORPHAN,

OR

ADVENTURES OF

ERNESTINA.

Tranſlated from the *French* of Madam RICCOBONI.

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M DCC LXXXI.

The BLIND BOY.

A fairy Tale.

ONCE, on a time, there was a civil war among the Gnomes, which had involved them in great confuſion and diſtreſs, when the queen of the Genii, attentive to maintain peace and harmony among her ſubjects, diſpatched Nirſa, one of the moſt beautiful fairies of her court, to be their arbitrator, to determine the differences between them, and make them as happy as it was in her power to do.

The charming Nirſa accordingly deſcended to the centre of the earth; appeaſed the troubles of the Gnomes, diſſipated their factions; and having procured tranquillity and re-eſtabliſhed their former union, left them, and was upon her return to the brilliant court of the queen of the fairies.

In

In her aſcent to the ætherial hemiſphere, Nirſa happening to fall into a reverie, the doves which drew her chariot with great rapidity, dazzled by the light of the ſun, to which they had been for ſeveral days unaccuſtomed, took a lower flight than uſual, and inſenſibly found themſelves near the ſurface of the earth.

At this time Nirſa accidentally looking down found herſelf juſt over a pleaſant and ſolitary grove; in which two perſons of different ſexes were ſitting at the foot of a ſycamore tree, and appeared to be deeply affected with grief. They mingled their tears, and it was eaſy to ſee that thoſe of both flowed from the ſame cauſe.

The fairy was touched with compaſſion, and as ſhe juſtly thought it one of the nobleſt prerogatives of power, to confer favours and inſpire gladneſs in every heart, ſhe directed the flight of her doves toward the earth, and while ſhe was gently guiding them down, ſhe caſt her eyes on metalline ſtone, on which was inſtantly engraven thoſe objects ſhe had at any time an inclination to ſee. Accordingly the hiſtory of theſe two young lovers preſented itſelf immediately to her eyes.

Nadine,

Nadine, the daughter of one of the prieſts of Viſtnou, had been educated with Zulmis, whoſe parents were alſo the conſecrated ſervants of the ſame deity. The marriage of this young couple being directed by an oracle, they were permitted a free intercourſe with each other; a liberty which inſenſibly accuſtomed their hearts to the language of love. Nadine, who was adored by Zulmis, loved him as paſſionately in return. There were certain obſtacles, however, to their happineſs, as will be related hereafter; but theſe were to be removed by a miraculous water, which a ſage, revered in that country, and whoſe name was Alibec, had undertaken to diſcover. Alibec had been already abſent two years, and our lovers were impatient for his return, not knowing that indeed Alibec was no more.

The lover of Nadine, though poſſeſſed of all other virtues and qualifications to render him agreeable, had never beheld the light of the ſun. His eye-lids had been cloſed from his birth, ſo that he could not behold the charms of his Nadine. His ſoul was nevertheleſs attached to hers by ſtronger ties than thoſe of perſonal beauty. Her ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, equality of temper, her underſtanding and the nobleneſs

of her ſentiments, had made a conqueſt of a heart formed to ſet a value on the good qualities of hers.

The mother of Nadine, having been initiated in the myſteries of Zoroaſter, entertained a ſuperſtition conſiſtent with the notions of the magi, and imagined the blindneſs of Zulmis to be a mark of reprobation. The ſun enlightens, ſaid ſhe, all his favourites on earth. Without doubt, therefore, he hates Zulmis. Let Zulmis appeaſe the anger of the ſun: let him ſee, or let him renounce the hand of Nadine.

An oracle, which was long ago conſulted, had declared that Zulmis would ſee the light before the end of his twentieth year. Alibec, the ſage, who had promiſed to fetch the miraculous water from the fountain of Zetma, was not yet returned; and this day was the laſt of the lovers' hopes. In an hour's time Zulmis will be twenty years old, and his eyes are not yet opened. The prieſts of Viſtnou are coming to ſeparate theſe faithful lovers, to disjoin their hands, to rend their hearts, and to compel them to ſay to each other, "I abſolve you from your vows." In the expectation of this fatal moment

Zulmis

Zulmis and Nadine ſat weeping, ſighing, and vowing eternal conſtancy.

Nirſa needed no farther inſtructions; but ſtepping out of her chariot, and wiſhing to aſſume the form of Alibec, ſhe was immediately metamorphoſed into a venerable old man.

Under what figure ſoever Nirſa choſe to appear, ſhe preſerved always the advantages attached to her being. Her ſoul of a ſuperior ſtamp to that of mere mortals, conſtantly enlightening and directing her. Thus, although a perſon in a maſk, when viewing himſelf in a mirrour, ſees a very different figure to his own, yet he does not thence loſe the idea of his real features. In like manner, the fairy, under an aſſumed form, talked and acted like the object of which ſhe had taken the appearance, without ever forgetting that ſhe was ſtill Nirſa.

Affecting a ſlow and majeſtic pace ſhe walked forward to the place where the two lovers were ſeated. Nadine, as ſoon as ſhe beheld this ſuppoſed Alibec, cried out for joy, and running to meet him, O Alibec, ſaid ſhe, thou favoured of Heaven, is it you I ſee? Are you come to

compleat our wiſhes! Have you brought the divine ſpecific? Do you come to make us happy? Ah! how many tears hath your long abſence coſt us? Had you delayed any longer I ſhould have loſt Zulmis for ever. In ſaying this, ſhe conducted the fairy to her lover, whom Nirſa regarded with pleaſure. The bloom of youth glowed on his cheeks; he was tall and graceful, his features delicate and regular. His hair was of a fine cheſnut colour, and hung over his ſhoulders in flowing ringlets. At hearing the name of Alibec, his cheeks glowed with freſh luſtre, as he was animated with the hopes of the conſequences of his arrival. He appeared indeed ſo handſome, that Nirſa could have declared him to be the moſt beautiful of all the children of Adam, if the charms of Nadine had not obliged her to ſuſpend her judgment.

The fairy ſat down upon a moſſy bank between them; replied to their queſtions, calmed their apprehenſions, and promiſed to make them happy. One part of your deſire, ſaid he, will be accompliſhed before night. The obſtacles that prevent the completion of your wiſhes will ſoon diſappear, and you ſhall be united. But, continued ſhe, my dear Nadine, as I am willing

to crown your wiſhes, you ought to be ſincere in letting me know them. Conſider well your real intereſt. I can join you together in a pleaſing union without opening the eyes of Zulmis. Is it his hand you are deſirous of? Or do you require me to put an end to his blindneſs? Are you certain you will not be a loſer by having this blindneſs removed?

Loſe by it! ſaid Nadine, quite aſtoniſhed, what can I poſſibly loſe by it?—Poſſibly more than you imagine, anſwered Nirſa. So long as Zulmis remains blind, he will continue to love you; the qualities that excited his love will conſtantly maintain it. Your huſband will ever be your lover. You will, in his opinion, be ever young, and your days will paſs away in uninterrupted tranquility. Zulmis will owe all his pleaſure to you, his happineſs in this world will depend wholly on yourſelf; and when the Author of Nature ſhall be pleaſed to call you to your eternal abode, you will go hence without ever having experienced the cruel pangs of jealouſy, or regret at the loſs of an inconſtant lover.

And Zulmis, ſaid Nadine, if he remains deſtitute of ſight, will he be more happy too?

No, continued the fairy; he will in the poſſeſſion of you enjoy a great bleſſing, but he will never know its full value. He will never have the pleaſure of contemplating thoſe charms, the ſight of which will add every moment to his pleaſure. The ſmiles of Nadine will never intoxicate his ſoul with delight. He will never know that Nadine is beautiful; but he will always love her, and Nadine will be perfectly happy.

Will Nadine be perfectly happy, cried Zulmis; that is enough for me; I know not what I loſe by living in darkneſs; but if Alibec will obtain for me the hand of Nadine, I ſhall regret nothing. Let me but have always the opportunity of hearing the melodious ſound of her delightful voice; of touching her ſoft hand, and feeling her gently preſs mine. Let her but love me, and continue repeatedly to tell me ſo; and all my deſires are accompliſhed. As to other bleſſings, if there be any greater than theſe, they are ſuch as I have no idea of, nor ever wiſh to know.

But, ſaid Nadine to Nirſa, ſighing, cannot you give him ſight, and yet inſure his conſtancy?

Do you imagine, replied Nirſa, that the ſcience of a mortal can ſurpaſs the power of Heaven? Are you ignorant of the extreme inconſtancy of his ſex? When the eyes of your lover ſhall have taken a view of a variety of objects capable of giving delight, can you hope ever to fix them on you alone? The immenſity of the univerſe is hardly ſufficient to gratify the extravagant curioſity and wiſhes of mankind. Nay, ſo far from being ſatisfied with the numberleſs beauties offered to their choice upon earth, they have been raſhly deſirous of compelling the intellectual inhabitants of the air to contribute to their pleaſures.

Alas! ſaid Nadine, if I deſire that Zulmis ſhould remain in his preſent ſituation, will not his only happineſs conſiſt in my affection? Will he be ſenſible of the value of this, who is incapable of knowing any other? Should any misfortune alſo deprive him of me, in what will he find conſolation? My dear Zulmis, ſhall an intereſted view of preſerving your tenderneſs for me, render me ſo cruel to you? Shall I refuſe you any kind of pleaſure you may be capable of enjoying? Shall I deny you the ſight of the heavens, the ſtars, the earth, its inhabitants,

the groves, the trees, the flowers, and all the wonders of Nature, that ſo aſtoniſh and delight us? Oh, no, moſt wiſe and powerful Alibec; open the eyes of Zulmis, let him ſee, let him admire, let him enjoy theſe objects, even though they ſhould eſtrange him from me: No matter, make him happy, and let him even ceaſe to love me, if his inconſtancy can in the leaſt add to his felicity.

No, Alibec, no, cried Zulmis, let me never ſee the light, let me remain ignorant of it for ever, if its enjoyment will make Nadine leſs dear to me.

Nirſa, affected with theſe tender ſentiments, took the hands of Nadine and Zulmis, and joining them; Charming pair, ſaid he, may your affections remain conſtantly the ſame. Conduct me to thoſe relations, who are deſirous of parting you. Let us go to the temple of Viſtnou, and you ſhall ſee the power of Alibec.

Having ſaid this, they went all three to the temple; where the parents of Nadine and Zulmis were aſſembled, in order to go in ſearch of the young lovers, and to ſeparate them for ever.

The

The ſight of Alibec filled them with joy and ſurpriſe. The friends of Zulmis were elated with hope, and the expectation of a miraculous event filled every one with emotion. The prieſts ſilently prepared to follow the commands of the ſage. The fairy received their reſpects; and, placing Zulmis on a ſeat upon an eminence, ſhe touched his eye-lids three times with a precious ſtone; then ſpeaking with a loud voice, ſhe pronounced the following words.

If the Supreme Being hath not condemned thee to perpetual darkneſs, let the veil be withdrawn from before thine eyes. Henceforth enjoy the contemplation of his works.

Immediately the eyelids of Zulmis began to ſeparate; they raiſed themſelves by degrees, and his eyes were open. The cry of joy and ſurprize which immediately eſcaped him, gave notice to all of the miracle that the fairy had effected. Upon this, ſhe ordered the croud to keep at a diſtance; and, preſenting herſelf alone to the view of Zulmis, ſpoke to him; but the latter was ſo ſtruck with aſtoniſhment, that he was inſenſible, dumb, and motionleſs.

In this ſituation he was afraid to indulge his joy, leſt he ſhould find himſelf deceived by an agreeable illuſion; and trembled leſt he ſhould awake, and his happineſs ſhould vaniſh.

Zulmis, ſaid Nirſa, if the brightneſs of the day offend you, cloſe your eyes again for a little while. You will ſoon open them again, and be able the more eaſily to diſtinguiſh the objects that ſurround you.

Zulmis, though aſtoniſhed and agitated with fear, yet enchanted with delight, cried, No, never will I willingly cloſe theſe eyes again, ſo long deprived of that brilliant ſight with which they are now bleſſed. His mother, unable to retain the tranſports of her joy, ran to him, and embracing him in her arms, Oh! my ſon! Oh! the goodneſs of heaven! O Alibec! O the happy day! repeated ſhe.

What do I hear, cried Zulmis, embracing her with ardour, is this my mother? Is this ſhe whoſe kind hand uſed to conduct me in darkneſs; whoſe tenderneſs anticipated my wants? Her voice penetrates my heart. How am I intereſted in thoſe features, which now for the firſt

ſhine I have beheld! With what reſpect, love, and veneration, they inſpire me! O my mother! my dear, my affectionate mother. Make me ſtill more happy. Shew me Nadine. Give me my Nadine, O wiſe Alibec! Deign to inſtruct me how to diſtinguiſh my dear Nadine.

In the mean time, the eyes of his charming miſtreſs ſwam in tears: She was going to advance, but was kept back by a ſign from Mirſa.

At the report of Alibec's return, a numerous crowd had haſtened to the temple. The fairy ordered the young prieſteſſes, who preſſed forward to ſee Zulmis, to advance. On which they preſently ſurrounded him; with Nadine ſtanding among them; who ſeeing how ſome of her companions were dreſſed, felt an emotion to which ſhe had hitherto been a ſtranger, and wiſhed ſhe had taken a little more pains in attiring herſelf.

The timid and uncertain looks of Zulmis were employed in ſearch of Nadine; and while they ran over the variety of beautiful features that were placed before him, his heart was fearful of miſtaking. At length, however, his eyes fixing

on his amiable miſtreſs, he wiſhed that ſhe might prove his Nadine. Taking a review of the young beauties again, he fixed a ſecond time on Nadine: then ſighed and pointing her out to Alibec, Shall I be inconſtant? ſaid he. Shall I be ſeduced by a new object? If that be not Nadine, I am indeed ungrateful and unhappy.

Theſe words penetrated the heart of Nadine; who ſaid, How! Zulmis, my dear Zulmis, would you ceaſe to love me?

Oh! it is her voice, cried Zulmis. It is, it is my Nadine, the delight, the idol of my ſoul. All the miracles of Nature, of which I had no idea, are aſſembled in that charming face. O Alibec, deprive me, if you will, of the ſight of every thing elſe in Nature; but increaſe in me the faculty of ſeeing, admiring, adoring my dear Nadine.

Nothing but exclamations of joy were heard around theſe tender lovers; they were encompaſſed with a garland of flowers; and, advancing up to the altar, were united for ever by the prieſt. After which Zulmis, certain of the poſſeſſion of his Nadine, turned round to thoſe who

who were felicitating him, O my friends, ſaid he, what pleaſure! what enchanting delight do I feel! Is it poſſible you can be ſo happy as I am, when meeting your friends you conſtantly ſay, *I am glad to* SEE *you.*

All eyes were now employed in gazing upon Zulmis and Nadine; in the mean while, Nirſa quitted the form of Alibec, and aſſumed her own. The multitude were aſtoniſhed, and the admiration that followed was equal to their firſt ſurprize. The women made her profound reverences, and the men threw themſelves at her feet.

Inhabitants of theſe peaceful plains, ſaid the fairy, the virtues of theſe lovers are rewarded. They will continue to love each other through life, and the angel of death will conduct them together to the region of bliſs and immortality. You, who partake of their joy, forget not the paſſage of Nirſa through your country.

On ſaying this, ſhe diſappeared. The Sylphs, at a ſignal given, raiſed up, near the temple, a ſuperb palace for Zulmis and Nadine, and ſtored it with immenſe treaſures. All thoſe who were preſent

preſent at this miraculous event, were bleſſed to the utmoſt extent of their wiſhes: and Nirſa, the charming Nirſa, reaſcended to the brilliant habitation of the fairies, with the agreeable ſatisfaction of having made numbers happy.

THE BEE.

IT is ſurpriſing to ſee how little moſt of the men, particularly thoſe of wealth and diſtinction, profit by the pains which are taken to cultivate their genius and underſtanding. From their earlieſt infancy the greateſt care is taken to form their minds, and to teach them to think and act with propriety; the abilities and erudition of the learned being employed to inſtill the principles of ſolid ſenſe and uſeful knowledge. How many opportunities offer to unfold and extend that ſublime intelligence, with which the firſt man was endued: an intelligence which, in their opinion, tranſmitted only from fathers to ſons, elevates the males of our ſpecies above all other creatures; inveſts them with the command of the univerſe, and authoriſes them to look down upon

upon their female companions as being ſubordinate to their genius, and condemned to an implicit acknowledgement of their ſuperiority.

I was one day on a viſit to a lady; at whoſe houſe I found ten or a dozen gentlemen of the firſt faſhion, in ſerious converſation on a recent and melancholy event; the ſubject was popular and univerſally intereſting; the conjectures they formed of the conſequences were various; each perſon ſupporting his own opinion by hiſtorical examples of ſimilar caſes. But, what blunders! what ſtrange confuſion did not they make! what ignorance did they not betray of facts, names, and dates! Theſe were indeed ſo groſs that it was impoſſible for me to forbear ſmiling.

When the lady of the houſe was alone with me, You ſee, ſaid ſhe, ſuch are the lords of the creation; deſtined to command, to govern, to direct, to tyranniſe over our ſex. Every thing is done for them; ten years at leaſt are devoted to the taſk of inſtructing them in reaſon and knowledge; in teaching them to obſerve, to perceive, to judge. They poſſeſs every thing; they enjoy every thing: the world ſeems made for them alone.

As to us females, neglected by our parents, we are too often looked upon as uſeleſs beings; born to run away with part of the inheritance of a ſon, who is the ſole object of the vanity of great families. We are uſually turned over to the care of ſome antiquated waiting-woman, who, growing too old to pleaſe at the toilette, undertakes the very difficult taſk of enlightening our firſt ideas. We are taken out of the hands of theſe ſagacious governantes to be put into convents, where we are taught to hate and fear the world by thoſe who know nothing of it themſelves, and can give us no true idea of its actual dangers. A certain modeſty of countenance, a few reſpectable principles, mixed with a thouſand prejudices, are the only advantages we reap during the ſeveral years thrown away among them. We then return to our father's houſe, in order to improve ourſelves in ſome frivolous talents, without any enjoyment whatever. Condemned to ſilence amidſt a circle of viſitors, a girl ſeems not to be one of the company. She is hardly ever ſpoken to, and if ſhe is, hardly ever dares to give an anſwer; ſo that her diſpoſition and underſtanding are utterly unknown. At length we are married, and it is really prodigious

digious if, at thirty years of age, a woman arrives by the help of her own reflections, and after the difficult ſtudy of others and herſelf, to think, from the dictates of her own heart, that ſhe is formed for acquiring that knowledge and practiſing thoſe virtues, which are undoubtedly common to both the ſexes. This lady was in the right: the men are generally elevated in their ſentiments. The women are obliged to elevate themſelves. They have frequently no other maſter than their own heart. This is, indeed, an able one, and his method is pretty certain. But how many obſtacles lie in the way of this difficult ſtudy? A thouſand objects divert their purſuit, and the manner of thinking which the men entertain of them is juſtly diſguſting.

One of my friends, who was ſorry to ſee a very amiable woman employed ſolely in decorating and diſplaying the charms of her perſon, thought it his duty to write to her, in order to engage her to beſtow a little time on more ſerious concerns. The following is her anſwer to his letter.

A Letter

*A Letter from the Marchioneſs of *** to ****

IT was needleſs, Sir, to cloſe your letter with any apology for the motives of your writing it. I peruſed it with attention and without being diſpleaſed at the advice it contained. Being fully determined to follow my own inclinations, I can liſten to counſel without being offended, eſpecially if it be dictated by friendſhip. I ſhall communicate my reaſons, alſo, to the worthy man who is deſirous of having me *perfect*, and hath ſo much eſteem for me as to think it would be *eaſy* for me to become ſo.

I ſpend *a conſiderable time at my toilette.* — It is very true, Sir, I employ a good deal *in the choice of my cloaths*, and in determining *my dreſs for the day.* — I admit all this to be true. But, would not this *loſt* time be better employed *in reading, in thinking, in reflecting, in cultivating my talents, enriching my mind, and improving my taſte.* —— You will permit me to ſay, " not at all, Sir, I don't believe it would."

So

So long as a ſplendid appearance, a provoking air and mien, levity, and impudence, attract a crowd of admirers; who are ſolicitous to pleaſe me; who cauſe me to be diſtinguiſhed, courted and preferred; to what purpoſe, Sir, ſhould I think of acquiring more eſtimable qualities, that are difficultly attained, and which I can do ſo eaſily and ſo conveniently without.

If your ſex would but ſet a greater value on our virtues; if they would pay to merit only that tribute they beſtow on beauty; you would ſee us labour to adorn our perſonal charms with mental attractions, with evenneſs of temper, goodneſs, candour, wit, and knowledge. Were we ſure of finding friends, we ſhould diſdain the art of gaining lovers.

But women inſpire only ſentiments of ſelf-intereſt; deſire, amuſement, the expectation of a tranſient pleaſure, are the ſecret motives of that homage which is paid to their charms. They are loved only becauſe they are handſome; though followed, courted, and careſſed, under the notion of their being weak: And the men are attached to them only from the hopes of their becoming fooliſh, and then of profiting by their folly.

folly. Is it worth while, Sir, for a woman to lay herſelf under any conſtraint in order to reap the trifling advantages annexed to real merit? What woman is not at leaſt worthy of the ſentiments a man is capable of entertaining for her at ſight?

If you, men, were to diſplay more underſtanding, the women would be more rational. The manner in which they live and ſpend their time, is not the fault of their natural diſpoſition, but the inevitable conſequence of your conduct towards them. It is your errours that neceſſarily lead them aſtray. Correct yourſelves, become juſt and diſcreet. Cultivate decency, and cheriſh virtue among yourſelves, and you will ſee them flouriſh among us; for as we are born to love you, our ſentiments will of courſe be determined by yours.——

My friend would willingly have made ſome anſwer to this letter, but on reflection found that he had nothing to ſay.

As I am upon the ſubject of the difference in the manner of educating children of different

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ent ſexes, I ſhall give here a ſhort extract from the Memoirs of Count Lipari.

When my wife was born, ſays the Count, I lived with the Duke de Matalon. I was then about ten years of age, and ſtill remember the ſtrange reception ſhe met with, on coming into the world. The fortune of the Duke was conſiderable, ſo that he ardently wiſhed for an heir to his eſtate: importuning Heaven inceſſantly with his prayers, in order to obtain ſo deſired a bleſſing. At length he was informed of the Dutcheſs's pregnancy: for which his gratitude broke forth in numberleſs gifts to the neighbouring convents and monaſteries. The altars were decorated with magnificent preſents, and his ſolicitude and tenderneſs daily increaſed for the Dutcheſs, who ſoon promiſed him the completion of his wiſhes.

At length the expected moment arrived; and the Dutcheſs was brought to bed of an amiable little innocent, which pleaded, at its birth, an undoubted right to all the natural affection and fondneſs of its parents. I thought I ought to felicitate the Duke on the event, but was kept back. It was neceſſary, before any rejoicing,

to

to examine the little ſtranger to know of what ſex it was: till then the place it ſhould occupy in the heart of its father was uncertain. This was ſoon determined, for alas! it was a girl; it was ſhe who is ſince become the companion of my life, and the object of my deareſt affections. The Duke, on finding this, put the child aſide with one hand, and wiped a tear from his eye with the other. An air of ſorrow ſpread itſelf over the faces of all preſent; the Dutcheſs alone, whoſe ſituation required ſome deference, being kept for ſome days ignorant of her misfortune in bringing into the world a girl.

Notwithſtanding I was then very young, I remember I was a good deal ſtruck at this caprice, and thought it very inhuman. I have alſo too much reflected on it ſince not to deſpiſe it: and perhaps the Counteſs of Lipari owes part of my tender and conſtant attachment to her, to the compaſſion with which ſhe inſpired me at the moment of her birth.

This ridiculous preference of a boy to a girl, is a weakneſs owing to our vanity, and is doubtleſs very reprehenſible. It is not one's fortune, one's virtue, or happineſs that one thinks to enjoy;

joy; that one wiſhes to ſurvive in the perſon of another; it is merely one's name.

It is with regret I ſay it; but if ſo many of the great, who imagined themſelves happy in leaving heirs to their titles and poſſeſſions, could but obſerve in what manner they have followed the ſteps of their anceſtors, there are very few of them who would have reaſon to be vain of having been the ſtock to ſuch withered branches.

The natural inconſiſtency of mankind may induce them to adopt prejudices; but when they are found to be abſolutely unjuſt, it is ſtrange that time and reflection do not eradicate them. I cannot think how it is poſſible for parents to look ſo differently on their children; to all of whom they lie under equal obligations, and whom the law of humanity, more ſacred than that of cuſtom, ought to render equally dear.

As Count de Lipari wrote his memoirs for the uſe of his two daughters, he here addreſſes himſelf to them in the following words.

Oh! my daughters, I received you with joy from the hands of Heaven. The arms of a tender

tender parent were always open to embrace you: you will enjoy my fortunes, you whom my fondeſt hopes are to ſee happy. My titles will indeed be extinct: the idle grandeur which now ſurrounds me, will be buried in oblivion; my name will be forgotten among men; but my memory will live in your hearts.

As I am a little out of humour to day, I have no inclination to narrative; nothing agreeable offering itſelf to my recollection. I ſhall finiſh this little pamphlet therefore, with a few letters tranſlated from the Arabick.

LET-

LETTERS

From

Princeſs ZELMAIDA to Prince ALAMIR, her Huſband.

LETTER I.

ALAS! Have you then left me? Deceived by your engaging pretences, I thought that your preparations menaced only the ſavage inhabitants of the woods. How ſorrowful do I awake, to find my ſpouſe departed; his ſlaves in haſte to follow him; to hear the neighings of his fiery ſteeds, the ſhrill ſound of his trumpets, and his chariots armed with ſcythes.—— Oh furious war! why have I known thy terrible ſtandards? My ſoul is troubled. In my fears I call upon my well beloved; but he is deaf to the voice of my grief. Does he fear to behold the tears I ſhed; and will he not partake of the bitterneſs of my ſorrow?

My deareſt Alamir! my looks are fixed upon that fatal field in which thy warriours are aſſembled. I perceive thy ſuperb pavillion? I call upon thee, with tears, to ſpare me a ſingle moment: but my cries are loſt in the wind—Ha! what noiſe is this I hear—Oh dreadful ſound! Cruel ſignal! Already my illuſtrious ſpouſe hath diſplayed his purple ſtandard. He graſps his mighty ſword, the trumpets call and the terrible ſound leads him far, far from Zelmaida. He goes, he runs, he flies, and that from me. Mine eyes, all bathed in tears, can hardly pierce the clouds of duſt which riſe on the plain.—Ye powers ſupreme! watch over his precious life?

O Alamir! O thou delight of my heart! Theſe hands ſhall plant a young laurel. I will water it every day with my tears. It will increaſe, and in the moment appointed for thy return, its beauties ſhall either ſhade thy head or cover my tomb.

LETTER II.

MY wandering ſteps conduct me at random through this wide palace. They guide me not in thoſe of him I love; of him who reſembles the ſtar of day, whoſe genial warmth animates all nature. O thou moſt beloved, moſt amiable of mortals, why, ah why doſt thou deprive me of thy glorious preſence? By what barbarous law art thou ſnatched from me? Why may not Zalmaida follow her Alamir and partake of his fatigues and dangers? She who hath ſo often partook of his pleaſures!

The happy moments recur to my memory and bring with them the moſt tender, the moſt delightful ideas, mixed with thine. Alas! thy cruel abſence hath tainted even this remembrance with grief. Ah why am I not ſtill in thoſe peaceful borders, where love ſubjected thee to my laws! Ye flowery gardens of my beloved father, why am I not ſtill repoſed with Alamir in the ſhade of your ſpreading cedars? There

would I interweave his hair with garlands of myrtle; there preſs into his cup the juice of delicious fruit; filling it up with a liquor of perfume, whoſe enchanting vapour ſhould cauſe him to fall languiſhing into my arms. There would he ſeek to recruit his exhauſted ſtrength on the lips of Zelmaida, whoſe ardour ſhould reſtore it.

O return, return, light of my life, thou guiding ſtar of my happineſs, reſtore me thoſe happy days, in which we were united in the bonds of pleaſure. As the roſe openeth itſelf in the morning, to be moiſtened with the tears of Aurora, ſo my heart expands itſelf without ceaſing, in the hopes of ſeeing thee.

No ſooner hath ſlumber cloſed mine eyes, than thou appeareſt to me in my ſleep. I hear, I ſee thee, I fly into thine arms, and enjoy thy delightful embrace. Thou ſpeakeſt, and the ſound of thy voice reanimates my heart. We enjoy the moſt rapturous delights, while the exceſs of my happineſs diſpells the errour of its fruition.——But I awake, I call thee, I look about for thee, but find thee not. Alas! my dear Alamir, I find thee not. The dawn appears,

ſcars, its brightneſs offends mine eyes; I hide myſelf from the ſight of my ſlaves, from their ſongs and their ſports. I ſhun thy ſiſters, and would, if poſſible, fly from myſelf. Then hiding my drooping head in the breaſt of thy mother, I weep, and cry, What is become of the huſband thou haſt given me?

LETTER III.

AT the riſing of the dawn I expected the proof of thy tenderneſs. Fearing to have the pleaſure I promiſed myſelf, on the receipt of thy letter, an inſtant delayed, I paſſed the night in the parterre where thou haſt ſo often gathered flowers to adorn me. My grief of heart led me inſenſibly under thoſe magnificent vaults where the aſhes of thy anceſtors are repoſed. Affected by an unexperienced emotion, I proſtrated myſelf before the tomb of thy illuſtrious father. I poured perfumes over his ſacred relicks; I invoked the ſpirit of that hero. I conjured him to attend thy ſteps, to conduct thee, and to divert from thee the poiſoned darts of thy enemies.——Ah! why, my deareſt Alamir, ſhouldſt thou have enemies?

Periſh every one that hates thee. Thoſe cruel hands, which ſcatter death around my Alamir, may even by chance reach through him the heart of his ſorrowful Zelmaida! Alas! my joy, my happineſs, my life is then dependent perhaps on a barbarian, an inhuman, a wretched mercenary——Ah! what deſtructive genius invented this fatal art of war, impiouſly to ſully the altars of glory with blood, and to raiſe a temple to honour on the mangled bodies of the dead!

O my dear Alamir! when firſt my hand and heart were given to thee as a reward of thy affection, thy virtues were conſpicuous in thy majeſtic countenance: on my arrival in theſe happy climates thy ſtates were in peace, and thy fortunate ſubjects preſented to my view the delightful picture of Paradiſe. Their joyful acclamations, their ardent wiſhes ſtill conſtantly accompanied thee. Thou waſt then no warrior, yet was thy glory leſs?——But the ſtar of day is going to enlighten other lands, the veil of night will ſpread itſelf over this palace before Aſor appears. Aſor ſhould have brought me a letter——Haſt thou then forgotten me? Oh! if abſence can baniſh me a moment from your thoughts!

thoughts! If you can ceaſe—Forgive me Alamir, no doubt injurious to thee ſhall ever riſe up in my ſoul—But what ſhould detain Aſor? Why doth he not preſent himſelf to my view? No, Alamir. No, it is not you, it is a ſlave, a negligent ſlave that mocks the deſires of Zelmaida.

LETTER IV. and laſt.

WHAT a frightful dream hath filled my trembling ſoul with horrour! O, Alamir, my dear Alamir! I have ſeen thee pale, fainting and almoſt covered with a veil, black and ſtained with blood. Thou ſeemedſt to meet my looks, in order to hide from me an arrow that pierced thy back.——I gave an horrible cry, which alarmed and brought all my ſlaves about me. And though I ſaw and ſpoke to them, I could not quiet my agitated ſpirits. The flutterings of my heart appeared to me a fatal omen. But Aſor is arrived, and your letter, removing that black cloud, hath reſtored me to thee, to love, to myſelf.

Ah! how can he who *loves me*, expoſe me to ſuch terrible alarms? Thou *adoreſt me*, and yet I weep. Thou *longeſt* for me, and yet I am far from thee. Thy *glory commands* thee to *ſuccour thine ally*; and in obedience to that thou rendeſt the heart of thy *dear Zelmaida*.

Ah! what is then this cruel glory? Are its obligations more ſacred than thy vows? More powerful than thy love? More powerful than mine? I lift up my hands and heart to the azure vault of Heaven; I bleſs the Author of nature, whoſe infinite wiſdom is omniſcient, that he hath formed our ſex in weakneſs; becauſe fortitude joined to beauty would have rendered us too ſuperior to other creatures: woman would have been without a maſter, man without a companion, and the ſweets of love had been unknown. Thanks to divine goodneſs, my only glory is to pleaſe thee; it impoſes on me no other law, than that of adoring thee and of confeſſing and approving it. I ſhall have diſcharged all my duties, if I ſhall be able to retain your affection and make you happy; if I ſhall be able to mark your days with pleaſures, and if expiring in your arms, I ſhall carry with me your eſteem and regret to the regions of futurity.

futurity. Honour doth not command me to fly from my Alamir; to afflict thy ſoul with devouring inquietude. It requires that I love thee and am conſtant to thy love. How eaſy, how delightful to practiſe the virtues of my condition! But ah, if I were obliged, like thee, to acquire immortal fame, by afflicting the object of my love, O my dear Alamir, I could not do it. No, the name of Zelmaida would never be engraven on the pillars of the temple of fame.

THE

HISTORY OF ERNESTINA.

ABOUT three months ago, a poor woman, a foreigner, arrived at Paris; ſhe was young and handſome, but entirely unknown and unacquainted with any perſon in that great city. She lodged on the ground-floor in the ſuburbs of St. Anthony, and maintained herſelf by working embroidery.

It happened one evening, after having been out to diſpoſe of her work, that ſhe was taken ſuddenly ill; and, notwithſtanding all the aſſiſtance that could be given her, expired without recovering her ſenſes.

Alarmed at this terrible accident, her neighbours filled her wretched abode with lamentations; vainly calling upon each other and lamenting

lamenting the untimely fate of the poor Chriſtina!

A citizen's widow, whoſe garden joined to the walls of the houſe, from which theſe exclamations proceeded, excited by the laudable deſire of being ſerviceable to the diſtreſſed, came in to enquire the cauſe. The people were informing her of the particulars, when ſhe caſt her eye on a little girl, between three and four years old, who was crying near the dead body; and pulling her mother by the gown, innocently called out, Dear mama awake, pray mama awake.

The heart of this good neighbour was too ſuſceptible not to melt into compaſſion at this moving ſight. Taking the little innocent, therefore, in her arms, ſhe embraced it tenderly and wiped away its tears. The beauty of the little creature adding to her compaſſion, ſhe gave orders for the mother's interment, and took the young orphan with her to her own houſe; the neceſſary meaſures being entered into for that purpoſe.

The name of this compaſſionate gentlewoman was Du Freſnoy. She was the widow of a rich

merchant, but in ſettling affairs with her huſband's relations, reſerved to herſelf only an income of 3000 livres *per annum*; making over the reſt of his fortune to his daughters by a former marriage: by which act of generoſity ſhe had the ſatisfaction of making an agreeable ſettlement on the daughters of a worthy man, whoſe memory was dear to her.

The name of the little orphan was Erneſtina. She was born in Germany, and did not appear to be of mean extraction. As ſhe ſpoke but little French, all that could be learned of her was, that a bad huſband had obliged the unhappy Chriſtina to leave her native country.

The poor child lamented the loſs of her mother, and enquired after her for ſeveral days; but, as is uſual, in time inſenſibly forgot her. As ſhe grew up ſhe grew genteel and handſome; ſo that at twelve years of age ſhe was a remarkable fine girl. Her ſhape was eaſy, her eyes black and full of fire, her hair of a fine nut-brown, her teeth white as ivory; ſhe had a ſoft engaging ſmile, and a good underſtanding; all which contributed to render her perfectly agreeable.

She

She was educated in a plain and ſimple manner, was taught to love virtue, and reſpect her honour as the higheſt of moral obligations: but living very retired her ideas of things were neceſſarily confined. She acquired but very little knowledge of the world, and retained long that peaceful and perilous ignorance of vice; which, keeping ſuſpicion at a diſtance, induces us to judge of others by ourſelves, and makes us conſider every one without diſtinction as diſpoſed to ſerve and oblige us.

Mrs. du Freſnoy, being ſtrongly attached to this young creature, reflected with concern on the condition to which ſhe might poſſibly be one day reduced. What would become of poor Erneſtina, would ſhe ſay, if her friend ſhould be taken from her and leave her deſtitute? As ſhe was not miſtreſs of her deſtiny, therefore, ſhe was deſirous of having her dear orphan taught ſome art or buſineſs, by which ſhe might be able genteelly to provide for herſelf.

To this end, ſhe thought of painting in miniature, and engaged a maſter to inſtruct her in drawing. Erneſtina being extremely docile and attentive, ſoon promiſed to make a conſiderable

progreſs

progreſs in this art. She had made indeed ſome proficiency, when Mrs. du Freſnoy, her friend, was attacked with a malignant fever, and in a ſhort time reduced to the laſt extremity; death taking her off in the fifth day of her illneſs.

Henrietta Dumenil, ſiſter to the drawing-maſter of Erneſtina, had contracted an intimate friendſhip with Mrs. du Freſnoy. They lived near each other, and viſited often. Henrietta was about thirty years of age; and, having been bred up by one of her rich relations, had hitherto lived a life of great diſſipation. To a very amiable diſpoſition, however, by nature, ſhe had united thoſe graces of converſation which are acquired only in polite circles. A want of fortune, of beauty, and the poſſeſſion of a good deal of underſtanding, had prevented her marrying; while the goodneſs of her character, her acknowledged virtue, and integrity of morals had procured her ſincere and valuable friends.

Henrietta had conſtantly attended on Mrs. Du Freſnoy during her illneſs; and after her deceaſe conducted the afflicted Erneſtina to the houſe of her relation; where ſhutting themſelves together in

in her apartment, they mixed their tears and indulged themſelves in that pleaſing conſolation of having each a companion to ſhare her ſorrows.

Henrietta, being appointed executrix of Mrs. Du Freſnoy's will, acquitted herſelf of that truſt with great fidelity. Her effects, which were bequeathed to Erneſtina, were ſold, and the money to the amount of 8000 livres veſted in proper hands for the uſe of Erneſtina.

The next object of conſideration was ſome decent and proper place for her to reſide. She could not poſſibly be with Henrietta.

In this uncertain ſituation, Mr. Dumenil, greatly pleaſed with the promiſing genius of his pupil, offered for a trifling ſum, to board her at his houſe, and to inſtruct her farther in his profeſſion. Erneſtina gratefully accepted his offers, and two months after the death of her benefactreſs, was conducted by Henrietta to the houſe of her brother.

Erneſtina was more deeply concerned, than might be expected from one of her age, for the death of Mrs. du Freſnoy; though without being

ſenſible of the conſequences, or how great was her loſs. The principal motive of her affliction were the thoughts of being ſeparated for ever from a kind and affectionate woman, who had been ſo much her friend, and was ſo tender, ſo indulgent a companion. Mrs. Dumenil was not of a diſpoſition to recompenſe her for the loſs of ſo good a friend. Volatile, careleſs, and even ſilly, ſhe turned every thing into jeſt, was affected by nothing, and looked upon perſons in affliction as very indifferent company.

She was about ſix and twenty years of age, and was paſſionately fond of amuſement and diſſipation; and, though her circumſtances did not permit her to indulge herſelf freely in the purchaſe of her favourite diverſions, ſhe found means to partake of them, by becoming the complaiſant friend of women, fond of them as herſelf, though not very ſtrict in their morals. Dumenil, the huſband, who was an eaſy, good-natured man, conſtantly employed in his profeſſion, and in the care of his health, ſuffered his wife to live as ſhe pleaſed, but was lucky enough to have in his ſervice an old thrifty houſe-keeper, who took care of his houſe and family.

In

In the mean time, Mrs. Dumenil frequented balls, plays, and all places of public reſort; ſupped abroad, returned home late, and generally ſlept part of the next day: but as her huſband did not complain of her irregularities, ſhe did not think of laying herſelf under any reſtraint.

The pupil of Mr. Dumenil, entirely taken up with her ſtudies, hardly ever ſaw her; and whenever they met, they as conſtantly parted again with a complaiſant and mutual indifference. Erneſtina had thus ſtudied three years under the directions of her maſter, without meeting with any thing to diſturb the uniform ſerenity of her life: during which time her genius and taſte had carried her to a pitch of excellence far beyond any leſſons her maſter was capable of giving her. This he perceived with a ſenſible pleaſure, and as he was often indiſpoſed and incapable of his buſineſs, he took every opportunity to publiſh the abilities of his pupil, and prevailed on ſeveral of his friends to permit her to draw their pictures; by which ſhe ſoon acquired a deſerved reputation.

Being

Being one day left alone in his cloſet, to finiſh the ornaments of a miniature, to be immediately delivered; ſhe heard the door open, and turning round, ſaw a gentleman enter the room, who by his air and dreſs appeared to be a perſon of diſtinction. A ſilent inclination of the head and a motion with her hand, invited him to ſit down while ſhe went on with her work, and was no otherwiſe ſurpriſed than to find in him the original of the portrait before her.

The gentleman ſat down, and Erneſtina could not forbear caſting her eyes firſt on him, and then on the picture, for a conſiderable time alternately.

The ſingularity of this adventure gave equal pleaſure and ſurprize to the gentleman; who was the Marquis de Clemenges, and had called upon Dumenil to haſten the finiſhing of his portrait; which was impatiently expected by a lady. He expected accordingly to have found the painter in his cloſet, where he uſually worked; but was agreeably diſappointed to find in his place an handſome young girl, who ſeemed to examine his features with a kind of pleaſure, that flattered him not a little. The circumſtance was ſimple

yet agreeable; and though at first only amusing, it afterwards made a very strong and lively impression on him.

While Ernestina was thus employed in comparing together the original and the copy, the Marquis was no less so, in admiring the profusion of graces that adorned the person of our female painter. Wishing that her education and understanding might correspond with so charming a figure, he was desirous also of hearing her speak, and was going to begin a conversation with her, when Mr. Dumenil entered the closet, and made him many apologies for not being able to send home the portrait.

On the other hand, the Marquis, who was now less solicitous to have it finished, interrupted him in the midst of his excuses; and, being desirous of prolonging the pleasure of seeing Ernestina's eyes fixed on his, pretended to be dissatisfied with the likeness, the colouring, and in short the design of the whole. As his censures, however, were thrown out at random, Ernestina could not help smiling at some of his observations.

On this the Marquis requeſted her to examine the picture more carefully, and to tell him if he was deceived in his judgment. With this ſhe readily complied, and placing herſelf oppoſite to him, compared it again, and declared, after a minute examination, that it was a perfect likeneſs, and a good picture. M. de Clemenges affected to perſiſt, nevertheleſs, in his own opinion, while ſhe, on the contrary, endeavoured to obviate his objections.

In this altercation, the ſweetneſs of her voice, the accuracy of her expreſſion, and the vivacity which the impropriety of the Marquis's objections had excited; all contributed to compleat her conqueſt over his heart. He proceeded then to deſire a copy of his picture, to be done entirely by Erneſtina. The painter promiſed he ſhould have one; and M. de Clemenges, wanting at laſt a pretext for prolonging the pleaſure of ſtaying with Erneſtina, left the room with reluctance, and Mr. Dumenil, attending him to his coach, ſatisfied his curioſity with regard to the name and ſituation of his pupil.

M. de Clemenges, whom chance had thus thrown in the way of Erneſtina, was a man

an agreeable figure, and ſomewhat ſingular character. Though deſcended from an ancient and illuſtrious family, he was by no means rich: the greater part of his fortune depending on the termination of a law-ſuit, which had been carried on for near a century. He was ſo fortunate, however, as to have one of his near relations in the miniſtry: whoſe favour he enjoyed with all its advantages, without making any ill uſe of it. Having more good ſenſe than vanity, more liberality than oſtentation, the greatneſs of his ſoul and his nice ſenſe of honour, eſtimated wealth and grandeur, by their abilities to render others happy. An amiable diſpoſition in himſelf induced him to deſire the friendſhip of others. Flatterers he had enow: theſe he ſerved and deſpiſed. He diſcovered indeed a motive of intereſt in almoſt all thoſe who paid their court to him; even love itſelf afforded him no pleaſures without alloy. And though ſometimes he might be led to conceive, for a moment, that he was preferred through a diſintereſted choice, the importunate requeſts and reiterated ſolicitations which he received the next, ſoon convinced him that his credit and intereſt was more courted than his perſon. Long had he been ſeeking for an heart capable of loving him merely for his

own

own ſake, and was under no little concern that he was not able to find one.

During the time that Erneſtina was copying the Marquis's picture, ſhe was conſtantly viſited by him every morning, without the leaſt ſuſpicion of the real cauſe of his aſſiduity. Too innocent to be capable of ſuſpicion, and ignorant of the danger to which the frequent ſight of an amiable perſon might expoſe her, her ſimplicity left her in perfect ſecurity. Thoſe who never experienced the deſire of pleaſing, may pleaſe a long time before they are aware of it: and love under the maſk of friendſhip may eaſily paſs undiſcovered.

M. de Clemenges being daily captivated more and more with Erneſtina, beheld with reluctance the copy of his picture almoſt finiſhed. To keep up a pretence therefore to continue his viſits, he affected a reſolution to ſet himſelf down to learn an art; for which he had by this time acquired ſome taſte and inclination. Dumenil himſelf being reduced to a very low ſtate of health, and deſtined ſoon to expire of an incurable diſorder, was ſeldom in a ſituation to direct the Marquis's eſſays. This therefore was the frequent taſk of the

the amiable Erneſtina; who inſtructed her tractable pupil to hold his crayons, and to copy her own drawings. In theſe attempts of our Marquis, ſhe had often reaſon to ſmile at his awkwardneſs, would at others reprimand him for want of application; and, pointing to two little girls who were drawing in the ſame room, would reproach him for not making equal progreſs with mere children.

The Marquis had never ſpent his time ſo agreeably in his life. The pleaſure of converſing familiarly with a charming girl of ſixteen, who was beautiful without being conſcious of it, modeſt without affectation, ſprightly, entertaining, and good-humoured; on whom neither his rank, fortune, nor intereſt, impoſed the leaſt reſerve; who ſhewed an unaffected joy at the ſight of him; whoſe innocence incited her to ſpeak her ſentiments without diſguiſe; to ſit by her ſide, to call her miſtreſs; to ſee her exert a kind of authority over him; to be employed in giving her ſatisfaction; to be anxious to pleaſe her without confeſſing the motive; to be flattered with the hopes of ſucceſs: All theſe circumſtances afforded ſo agreeable, ſo intereſting an employment to the Marquis de Clemenges, that he inſenſibly

ſenſibly became indifferent to the reliſh of thoſe vain amuſements, which conſtitute the pleaſures of idleneſs.

Mrs. Dumenil being now obliged by her huſband's illneſs to keep more at home, diſcovered the motives of the Marquis's turning painter. Accordingly ſhe ſoon gained his confidence by her complacent behaviour; held frequent and long conferences with him, entered into his views, and, being ſatisfied with his generoſity, began to treat Erneſtina as a perſon, whoſe company ſhe was ſorry ſhe had ſo long neglected. Profeſſing therefore a particular regard for her, ſhe became very aſſiduous in furniſhing her with every thing ſhe wanted or deſired. By this means Erneſtina's ſituation was every day rendered more eaſy and agreeable to her; and, being ſenſibly affected by this kind of behaviour in Mrs. Dumevil, ſhe ſoon forgot the long indifference with which ſhe had hitherto treated her, and overlooked that levity of mind; by which, after all, ſhe was no ſufferer. We are ſeldom much offended at the faults of others, when we are not injured by them. As Mrs. Dumenil alſo was gay, complaiſant, and ſecretly intereſted in gaining the good-will of Erneſtina, it was eaſy for her

her to inſpire a girl of ſo much good nature and ſenſibility, with a friendſhip for her; eſpecially as ſhe believed ſhe was indebted to her for thoſe many conveniencies, and even affluence, which ſhe now began to enjoy.

Poor Dumenil himſelf had not long to live; meanwhile the certainty of his approaching death often drew tears from the eyes of his ſuſceptible pupil; in which ſorrowful ſituation ſhe was more than once ſurpriſed by the Marquis.

To this anxiety was alſo added another. Her friend Henrietta who had been about two months gone to Brittany, ſuddenly ceaſed to correſpond with her, and that at a time when her advice and direction ſeemed particularly neceſſary. Erneſtina wrote to her ſeveral times, but received no anſwer, which greatly afflicted her. What could ſhe think? Was her friend ſick? Did ſhe neglect to adviſe her what to do, on the death of her maſter?

On having mentioned this cauſe of her uneaſineſs to Mrs. Dumenil, ſhe aſſured her that Henrietta was in good health, and gently complained of her aſking advice, for which ſhe ſtood in no

need. Do you conceive, my dear, ſaid ſhe, in a compaſſionate tone, that I could be capable of deſerting you? And do you intend to leave me? No, my dear Erneſtina, we muſt never part. You ſhall ſhare my fortune, which is, I doubt not, ſufficient to make you happy. Come, come, I have reſources to which you are a ſtranger. But this is a ſecret I would not have you mention. Ceaſe to be alarmed therefore, and regret no longer the loſs of Henrietta's advice, which might only diſconcert the plan I have laid for your happineſs. The repetition of theſe aſſurances at length diſſipated Erneſtina's uneaſineſs; but ſhe could not forget Henrietta's neglect of her, eſpecially as ſhe promiſed at parting, to intereſt herſelf in her fortune, and to procure her a proper retreat on her brother's death. She could not reconcile this inconſiſtency of behaviour with Henrietta's character; but her increaſing attachment for Mrs. Dumenil gradually decreaſed her concern on this account; to the removal of which the aſſiduities of the Marquis did not a little contribute.

The time now drew near when M. de Clemengis was obliged to leave Paris. The regiment he commanded was ordered into Italy, and

and he was under a neceſſity of ſoon joining it. This circumſtance gave him great uneaſineſs, which he in vain endeavoured to hide from Erneſtina. She perceived his melancholy, was affected by it, and even ſolicited to know the cauſe. But finding that her ſolicitations only aggravated his diſtreſs, ſhe deſiſted. She could not help continuing to ſympathize, however, with his anxiety; ſhe watched his looks, but feared to meet them; lamenting in ſecret, and often ſaying to herſelf, Is this the man I lately thought ſo happy. Alas! what can be the cauſe of this ſtrange alteration!

While Erneſtina thus partook of the Marquis's diſtreſs without being conſcious of the motives by which ſhe was actuated, he was employed, on the other hand, in making a generous proviſion for her, and rendering her independent of the world.

Mrs. Dumenil, engaged by an handſome recompence to beſtow, as from herſelf, the fortune Erneſtina was going to poſſeſs from the Marquis's generoſity, knew not how to account for this ſtrange conduct in a lover at once ſo prudent and ſo liberal.

How can you hope, ſaid ſhe, to make any impreſſion on the heart of Erneſtina, if you conceal from her the paſſion ſhe hath inſpired? You are going to beſtow a fortune on her, and would leave her ignorant both of your paſſion and your bounty!——May ſhe ever remain ignorant of them, replied the Marquis; my deſign is to pleaſe, not to ſeduce her: to make her independent, not to lay her under a ſlaviſh reſtraint. I only wiſh to ſee in her an innocent affection for me, and that ſhe ſhould be attached to me, without fear, hope, expectation or deſign. I have obſerved a tender concern appear in her looks, ever ſince ſhe remarked my melancholy. Perhaps ſhe loves me. And ſhall I lay any impoſition or reſtraint on ſo charming a creature? By exciting her gratitude, I might poſſibly force her inclination; and ſhall I deprive myſelf of the pleaſure of thinking myſelf in the poſſeſſion of a heart that beats only for me?

The Marquis then repeated to Mrs. Dumenil the inſtructions he had before given her, reſpecting the manner in which he would have her conduct herſelf after the death of her huſband. She, on her part, promiſed punctually

to

to follow his directions; to keep his secret faithfully, and to inform him by letter, of Ernestina's sentiments concerning her change of circumstances.

In a few days after this conference the Marquis departed; having taken measures to have a valuable box, in which was his picture painted by Dumenil, delivered to Ernestina the day after his departure, about his usual time of visiting her. With this box was delivered also the following letter.

The Marquis de CLEMENGIS to ERNESTINA.

I leave you, my charming mistress; deprived by an indispensable duty, of the pleasure of any longer seeing you, and of profiting by your goodness and instructions, both which I shall never forget. The only consolation indeed which I shall have in a long and painful absence, will be to recollect and revolve them in my mind. At your leisure, let me beg you to copy the inclosed portrait. Multiply the images of your friend, whose heart is tenderly attached to you, and wish sometimes to see the original.

Erneſtina was affected with the ſtrangeſt emotions on the peruſal of this billet; but could not conceive why the Marquis ſhould leave Paris without taking his leave of her. She read his letter over and over again, without being able to account for this myſterious conduct. Her reſentment however inſenſibly ſubſided into tenderneſs. Having been accuſtomed to ſee and converſe with the Marquis daily, and of paſſing whole hours in his company, ſhe was now deprived of a pleaſure that was become habitual to her. Her eyes, now ſwimming in tears, were fixed on the portrait; but as ſhe examined it no longer as an artiſt, ſhe now found that M. de Clemengis had not found fault with it without reaſon. Here indeed, ſaid ſhe, are his features and aſpect; but where is the life, the ſoul that animated them. Where is that ſweet and friendly air of benevolence that diffuſed itſelf over the whole countenance. What numberleſs graces are here wanting? Saying this, ſhe threw aſide the drawings that lay upon the table, and taking up her crayons, ſhe ſat down full of the idea of the Marquis, flattering herſelf ſhe ſhould be able to trace a greater reſemblance of him from memory alone.

This

This intereſting work was interrupted in a few days, by the death of poor Dumenil, which Erneſtina, having a ſincere regard for him, truly regretted. His widow, in haſte to leave a place, which excited only mournful ideas, in which ſhe by no means delighted to indulge herſelf, committed the ſettlement of his affairs to a relation, and as ſoon as decency would permit, removed with Erneſtina to a pleaſant houſe, ſituated about three leagues from Paris, where a number of ſervants, already prepared for their arrival, were ready to receive their commands. As to Erneſtina, ſhe could not help ſtill regretting the loſs of her maſter, nor forget the many inſtances of friendſhip and good nature he had ſhown her. Her preſent agreeable ſituation, however, diverted her ſorrow. She was charmed with the magnificence of the houſe and apartments, and the elegance of the gardens. Who hath given you, ſaid ſhe to her friend, the uſe of this delightful manſion? How happy muſt be the poſſeſſors of ſo charming a dwelling!

If the privilege of reſiding here appear to you ſuch happineſs, replied Mrs. Dumenil, it is an happineſs which you may enjoy without in-

terruption. I am now in poſſeſſion of a conſiderable fortune; this houſe and gardens are a part of it, and I beg you would without ceremony look upon yourſelf as the miſtreſs of it. She then told Erneſtina a plauſible ſtory of having contracted a marriage againſt the inclinations of her parents, by which ſhe had been deprived of her fortune during the life of her huſband.

Erneſtina, ignorant of the world, and making no doubt of her ſincerity, congratulated her on the happy change of her ſituation, and returned her acknowledgement for the aſſurances made her of ſharing with her the pleaſures of her new condition. Mrs. Dumenil then made her ſome conſiderable preſents, appointed her a waiting woman, and prevailed on her to ſpend ſome time at her toilette, to receive the inſtructions of a dancing-maſter, and to apply herſelf to muſick, in which latter ſhe ſoon made conſiderable proficiency; acquiring a fine finger on the harpſichord; to which ſhe was ſoon enabled by the help of a delicate ear, to join the melody of her voice. The deſire of pleaſing her friend Mrs. Dumenil, quickened the progreſs ſhe made in theſe polite acquiſitions: to which

ſhe

ſhe was alſo animated by the pleaſure of thinking the Marquis would find her on his return, ſtill more amiable and deſerving his friendſhip.

The Marquis, at his departure, intended to have written frequently to Erneſtina; but finding it impoſſible for him to do it without giving way to that tenderneſs which poſſeſſed his heart, he was forced to content himſelf with the receipt of letters from Mrs. Dumenil; who gave him weekly information of Erneſtina's health and amuſements. Among other pieces of intelligence of this kind, he was not a little flattered by being told that Erneſtina employed a conſiderable part of her leiſure either in beginning freſh copies of his portrait, or in retouching that which ſhe had determined to finiſh from her memory.

Perſons of different ſentiments are never equally happy in the poſſeſſion of the ſame advantages. Mrs. Dumenil frequently regretted her old friends and the noiſy pleaſures of the town; nay ſometimes ſhe even repented of having engaged in a way of life ſo contrary to her own inclinations; the advantages however which ſhe enjoyed from her compliance and the

hopes of returning to Paris in the winter, contributed to alleviate the irkſomeneſs of ſolitude.

Erneſtina, who was, on the other hand, accuſtomed to retirement, lived perfectly contented. Every thing in nature preſented to her view an agreeable or intereſting ſpectacle. The riſing and the ſetting of the ſun, the rural proſpects of the woods, groves and meadows; the ſinging of the birds, and the various productions of the earth, all offered to her tranquil mind either an object of pleaſure, or afforded room for pleaſing ſpeculation. Her affection for the Marquis was attended with no anxiety, while ſhe taſted all the ſweets of ſenſibility, without any commixture of the violent paſſions. She wiſhed indeed to ſee the Marquis again, but this deſire was not attended with any painful emotion.

The preliminaries of peace being pretty far advanced at the opening of the campaign, the two armies were nothing more than corps of obſervation. Towards Midſummer they received orders to quit the field; and the French troops accordingly repaſſed the mountains. The Marquis de Clemengis, falling ſick at Turin, did

did not return to Paris till the beginning of Autumn. He was no ſooner arrived, however, and had diſpatched his more indiſpenſable buſineſs, than he yielded to the longing deſire he felt of viſiting the dear object of his affections. He repaired therefore without delay to that pleaſant habitation, which his generoſity had made the property of Erneſtina.

She happened to be alone at his arrival; and, at hearing his name mentioned, ſtarted up in an extaſy of joy and ſurprize, and ran to meet him. She aſked him a thouſand queſtions, one after another, and ingenuouſly permitted him to ſee all the pleaſure ſhe felt at this agreeable interview. Affected in the moſt ſenſible manner at this reception, and looking at Erneſtina at once with pleaſure and aſtoniſhment, he remained for ſome time ſilent. She had hitherto been ſeen by him only in a plain attire; her charms indebted only to the freſhneſs of her bloom, the regularity of her features, and her other natural accompliſhments. Theſe were now heightened by a thouſand graces. The happy eaſe of her motion, and that becoming dignity which attends on conſcious innocence united to beauty, inſpired the Marquis with ad-

ditional love and reſpect. He was almoſt ready to conceit that he had never ſeen this charming creature before. She ſeemed, as it were, born for that ſtate in which his generoſity had placed her. Ornamented with his preſents, and ſurrounded by the objects of his bounty, ſhe was ignorant of her obligations to him, and therefore owed him no gratitude. Hence undebaſed by ſervility, ſhe had nothing to mortify her in the eyes of a man, who was ſo far from daring to boaſt his favours, that he dreaded they ſhould be known, and even proceeded to ſelf-examination whether he had not deceived himſelf as to the motives of his liberality.

He continued indeed to preſerve a timid and embarraſſed air in her company for ſeveral days: he heſitated in giving her his uſual appellation of miſtreſs, and found great difficulty in reſuming the eaſe and familiarity of their former converſation. Before the time of his departure, he became ſtudious only of the deſire to pleaſe, but while he remained uncertain of the ſentiments he inſpired, his doubts ſufficiently prevailed on him to conceal his own. Yet to behold Erneſtina ſuſceptible and not dare to appear ſo himſelf; to read in her eyes the tender language of

love,

love, and yet to remain ſilent himſelf, How terrible a conſtraint! What a puniſhment for ſo fond and paſſionate a lover; to one who at laſt was in poſſeſſion of an happineſs he had long ſighed for in vain, that of being truly and ſincerely beloved.

His fortune being ſtill dependent on a conteſt difficult to be decided, the neceſſity of keeping in favour with a relation, whoſe friendſhip deſerved his utmoſt gratitude; this, together with the prevailing prejudices of mankind, raiſed an inſurmountable barrier againſt his union with Erneſtina. At leaſt it was ſuch as he could not think of ſurmounting. At the ſame time his integrity and probity would not ſuffer him to think of ſeducing a girl worthy of his higheſt eſteem, or of ſetting a ſhameful price on gifts which ſhe neither ſolicited nor required. To deprive himſelf of the pleaſure of ſeeing and converſing with her, was indeed one way to recover his tranquillity; but this method was too diſagreeable for him to think of attempting it. He could have born perhaps to afflict himſelf by a painful abſence, but the certainty of being beloved by Erneſtina prevented his putting it in execution. How was it poſſible for him to

fly from an amiable girl, whoſe attachment to him daily increaſed? Such unaccountable conduct would juſtly have merited contempt. He could not help perceiving that his preſence gave pleaſure to Erneſtina; how could he then determine to deprive her of that pleaſure which was probably become eſſential to her happineſs?

This latter conſideration had ſo powerful an effect on his mind, that he came to a reſolution to make no alteration in his conduct toward Erneſtina: ſo that ſhe perceived nothing more in him than the ſincere, aſſiduous and complacent friend; ſtudious of deviſing amuſements for her, and contented in being permitted to partake of them.

The time, which they now paſſed together, glided on with rapidity. The deſire of pleaſing, the delicate attentions, and the tender concern which ſubſiſted between theſe avowed friends and ſecret lovers, kept up the unexpreſſible charm of this delightful commerce. Erneſtina taſted all the ſweets of it, without fear or apprehenſion; but her felicity was too great not to be mixed with ſome alloy. The time was at hand when the diſſipation of that happy ignorance,

rance, which cauſed it, was to deſtroy it for ever.

Mrs. Dumenil, little capable of making a proper diſtinction between different characters, knew not the real ſentiments nor intentions of the Marquis. She had engaged to aſſiſt him in his deſigns, in expectation of partaking in thoſe pleaſures which a liberal-minded lover beſtows on a favorite miſtreſs. An open houſe, a numerous circle of acquaintance, and continual entertainments, offered a moſt enchanting proſpect to her imagination. But, finding herſelf diſappointed in theſe expectations, there appeared a viſible change in her temper and behaviour. She even complained to the Marquis of her being unable to ſupport the ſolitude of their retirement; and talked of leaving Erneſtina if ſhe paſſed the winter in the country.

It was by no means the Marquis's intention to leave her there; he had already furniſhed her a houſe in Paris; but as it was not his deſign to introduce his young friend to the world, he repented his having placed his confidence in a woman of ſo fickle a diſpoſition: ſo that there

was

was a neceſſity either of fixing her by freſh obligations, or to remove her entirely from Erneſtina. New liberalities and great complacence appeaſed Mrs. Dumenil; who returned in conſequence to Paris, and conducted Erneſtina to an elegantly furniſhed houſe in the ſuburbs of St. Germain. Two days after their arrival, ſhe preſented her a box of jewels, to uſe when ſhe had occaſion for them; with which Erneſtina was greatly pleaſed, looking upon it as a freſh proof of the friendſhip of Mrs. Dumenil. She was not, however, to be dazzled with magnificence. She began to be accuſtomed to ſplendour, and as ſhe was not deſirous of exciting the envy of others, ſhe was far from ſetting that value on ſuch brilliant trifles, which is done by the generality of women.

Mrs. Dumenil preſſed her to dreſs herſelf in them, and recollecting that the Marquis was at Verſailles, ſhe took the opportunity of his abſence to carry Erneſtina to the opera. Her intention was to give her a taſte for thoſe pleaſures to which ſhe herſelf gave the preference, and thereby to compell the Marquis to allow her the enjoyment of them.

The novelty of the ſpectacle attracted the whole attention of Erneſtina: ſo that ſhe took no notice of a crowd of ſpectators, who were charmed to ſee her, and yet ſurprized that they knew not who ſhe was. A very rich dreſs, a ſmall quantity of rouge, and a great deal of modeſty; the decent appearance of Mrs. Dumenil, and the noble air of her young companion; all together made them paſs for country ladies newly arrived in town. All eyes were fixed on Erneſtina; ſo that on going out of the box ſhe ſaw herſelf ſurrounded by a number of young fellows; whoſe indiſcreet curioſity is often embarraſſing to themſelves and always inconvenient to others.

Being come to the bottom of the ſtairs, where ſeveral ladies were waiting for their carriages, Erneſtina ſaw her friend Henrietta, whom ſhe imagined to be ſtill in Brittany. To ſet eyes on her, call out to her, preſs through the crowd, run after her, and embrace her, ſtill repeating Henrietta, my dear Henrietta! was all done ſo inſtantaneouſly that her companion could not prevent her.

Henrietta

Henrietta ſeemed, on her part, a good deal embarraſſed, and was ſo far from returning Erneſtina's careſſes, that ſhe forbad them, by gently puſhing her aſide. Conſider, Miſs, ſaid ſhe, this is neither a proper time nor place to renew an acquaintance that you have ſo long ſince broke off. What is the meaning of this pretended fondneſs after you have ſo long forgotten me? Pray, Miſs, retire. Every thing contributes to ſeparate us at preſent; and you ought not to regret the loſs of a friend that can be of no uſe to you.

And by what means have I loſt your friendſhip? cried Erneſtina. How my dear Henrietta, do you then no longer love me, and do you own it too? I am really ſorry for you, Miſs: and this is loving you ſtill, and as much as our preſent difference of ſentiments can permit me. Then looking at her with an air of compaſſion and affection, ſhe added in a lower tone of voice, amiable and unhappy girl! can it be you? Whence comes this ſtrange alteration? This ſplendid appearance is a poor exchange for thoſe ſimple and native charms that adorned the innocent pupil of my late brother. A lady, who accompanied her, calling her now to go out,

out, ſhe followed her, leaving poor Erneſtina confounded, aſtoniſhed and motionleſs.

Mrs. Dumenil did not chuſe to go up to her ſiſter-in-law; and when ſhe returned home, was ſo ruffled and uneaſy that ſhe ſat ſome time without ſpeaking; waiting for Erneſtina to ſpeak firſt, in order to judge from her diſcourſe what might have been that of Henrietta. It ſeemed to her impoſſible that in ſo ſhort a converſation they could have proceeded to any very particular explanation: Erneſtina, however, was long ſilent, ſighed to herſelf, and by the conſternation ſhe ſeemed to be in, gave Mrs. Dumenil a good deal of real embarraſſment.

In the mean time Erneſtina ſat muſing on the expreſſions of Henrietta, of which ſhe could not, after all her conjectures, diſcover the meaning. Henrietta, ſays ſhe, pities me; ſhe tells me every thing contributes to part us. The preſents you have beſtowed on me appear to offend her. *They are too ſplendid for the pupil of her brother!* She called me *unfortunate girl!* Whence could ariſe a compariſon ſo very different from that ſhe formerly entertained for me? Alas! I formerly excited in her a friendly pity, why am I thus mor-

mortified at preſent? Abandoned to providence in my childhood, I owed my ſubſiſtence and education to the generous friendſhip of Madam du Freſnoy. Henrietta, the diſtributer of her bounties, did not ceaſe to eſteem me when ſhe reſigned them up to my charge. Why ſhould your preſents, Madam, debaſe me in her opinion? Have I done any harm in receiving them? Doubtleſs I have: this ſplendour is improper for me: this borrowed finery may attract the eyes of thoſe who may reproach me for the meanneſs of my former ſituation. How do I know? Perhaps it is not permitted a perſon that has been once poor to be raiſed out of her obſcurity. Perhaps in ſubſiſting on the bounties of a friend, all that I accept beyond mere neceſſaries, may render me ridiculous and contemptible.

Poh! replied Madam Dumenil, What are the thoughts of Henrietta to you? Are you dependent on her? Hath that haughty, prudiſh minx any authority over you? How dare ſhe to blame you for receiving my preſents, who herſelf owes every thing ſhe enjoys to a diſtant relation? You, diſobliged me extremely in running up to her in that manner. She hath always

ways hated me; but ſince the death of her brother I have had the pleaſure of mortifying her. She wanted to interfere truly in the regulation of my conduct, and in the direction of yours; but I ſhut my doors againſt her and ſhook off her tyranny. I know well enough ſhe is angry with me; ſhe will not eaſily forgive my making you happy without conſulting her about the means; to which it is ten to one but the auſterity of her notions would have objected.

How! cried Erneſtina, greatly ſurprized, have you ſhut your doors againſt Henrietta? Good God! What is it you tell me? And why do you appear ſo diſpleaſed at that? ſaid Mrs Dumenil. Why ſhould you regret that? If I have deprived you of one friend, have not you found another in me? After what I have done for you, I am ſurprized to find you ſo much more ſtrongly attached to another. Come, come, enjoy without any uneaſineſs thoſe conveniencies which have ſo offended the very delicate Henrietta: and if you ſhould again accidentally meet a perſon ſo diſagreeable to me, I hope you will avoid her. I think my friendſhip may expect of you this ſlight piece of condeſcenſion.

Erneſtina was afraid of inſiſting on farther explanations; ſhe remained ſorrowful and diſturbed the whole evening. Her inquietude increaſed during the night. A thouſand confuſed reflections crowded into her mind. Why, ſaid ſhe to herſelf, did Mrs. Dumenil continue to tell me that her ſiſter-in-law was ſtill in Brittany? Whence could ariſe ſo fixed and violent a hatred between them? During the life of Dumenil, they were not fond of each other, yet they ſaw each other pretty often? How could Henrietta pretend to oppoſe any advantageous offers in favour of a friend; ſhe who had ſo often wiſhed herſelf rich for her ſake, that ſhe might divide her fortune with her dear pupil! She remarked that Mrs. Dumenil called her haughty and prudiſh. Theſe epithets little agreed with the natural ſweetneſs of Henrietta's diſpoſition. She began to think from hence that there was ſomething myſterious in the conduct of her companion: a vague and imperfect ſuſpicion now raiſed in her ſome miſtruſt, and excited ſome apprehenſions of fear. She endeavoured indeed to ſuppreſs theſe emotions, and to give Mrs. Dumenil a proof of her attachment and gratitude in conforming implicitly to her will. She could not ſupport the doubts, how-

however, which ſhe now began to entertain. She thought ſhe had ſeen a mixture of contempt and indignation in the looks of Henrietta: perhaps her friend, deceived by ſome falſe report, might ſuſpect her of fomenting the difference between her and her ſiſter-in-law. This laſt reflection raiſed a deſire of coming to an explanation with Henrietta; and, as Erneſtina was not accuſtomed to reſiſt the emotions of her heart, ſhe indulged herſelf in the thought and impatiently waited for the morning. She roſe at break of day, and dreſſing herſelf neatly but very plain, ſhe was ready for her expedition when her ſervant came up. After a little freſh conſideration and ſome heſitation, ſhe therefore ſet out alone, to wait on Henrietta.

Her friend was but juſt awoke, when this unexpected viſiter was introduced to her. Good God, cried ſhe, to Erneſtina, with an air of aſtoniſhment and ſurprize, who thought of ſeeing you here? Pray what preſſing buſineſs hath brought you ſo early hither.

The moſt intereſting buſineſs of my life, replied ſhe; I come to know whether you are ſtill that friend, who was formerly ſo ſuſceptible

of

of my misfortunes, whoſe kind hand dried up my tears, and whoſe tender heart was open to ſympathize with my affliction: If you are not altered, why did you ſo cruelly inſult me yeſterday? If you ceaſe to love me, tell me at leaſt how I came to loſe your affection. I have hitherto complained of your long neglect, and your ſurprizing forgetfulneſs, at preſent I have reaſon to complain of your injuſtice. Then throwing her arms round the neck of her friend, ſhe tenderly embraced her, crying out, Speak my dear Henrietta, tell me what it is that ſeparates us, and why you ſeem to commiſerate my preſent happy ſituation.

Happy ſituation! repeated Henrietta. If you think ſuch a ſituation happy, is it poſſible you can be ſo much affected by a ſlight reproach? But with what deſign do you pay me this viſit? Why do you preſs me to ſpeak? Did you not plainly underſtand me?

No, ſaid Erneſtina, I did not. With what do you reproach me? What have I done? In what reſpect do our *ſentiments differ?* How doth my conduct appear to you to be blameable? This is ſtrange, replied Henrietta, look-

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ing on her very earneſtly, how can you aſk with an air of ſo much unconcern, ſo ſhocking a queſtion? In departing from your duty, have you loſt alſo the very remembrance of the obligations it impoſes on you? Have you no idea of them left? You bluſh, ſaid ſhe, and caſt down your eyes; there are ſtill the remains of modeſty in the face of Erneſtina, ah! why is it baniſhed from her heart?

I bluſh at your expreſſions, and not at my own faults, replied Erneſtina. Having been careful to fulfill all thoſe obligations, which I have been taught as my duty, I have nothing to reproach myſelf with. Yet you accuſe me of *departing from my duty*, and of having *loſt the very idea of the obligations it impoſes*. Pray, who hath informed you that I have done this? On what grounds do you conclude it?

Well! I never could have ſuſpected you of ſuch aſtoniſhing aſſurance, ſaid Henrietta. But let us put an end to this converſation: and do not compell me to explain myſelf in regard to thoſe ſentiments it muſt neceſſarily inſpire. Yes, Erneſtina, you muſt have made a very willing ſacrifice to wealth, if you have not ſo much de-

cency left as to bluſh at the deſpicable ſituation you have preferred.

My God! cried Erneſtina, burſting into tears, is this a friend, is this Henrietta that treats me with ſuch cruelty? A *deſpicable* ſituation! that I have *preferred!* I renounce *decency* and make a *ſacrifice to wealth!* I! How? When? Where? On what account is it, Miſs, that you inſult me thus, and venture to impute to me ſuch odious crimes?

Henrietta, moved at the tears of a young perſon who was ſo long dear to her, could not forbear ſympathizing with her grief. The goodneſs of her natural diſpoſition induced her to ſeek excuſes for Erneſtina, and to throw on her ſiſter-in-law all the blame, of ſeducing a young and artleſs innocent ſo eaſy to be deceived. She muſed a moment, and then taking her friend by the hand, Come, ſaid ſhe, now tell me truly; anſwer me without heſitation to what I ſhall aſk you. Why did you not anſwer my letters when I wrote to you from Brittany? Why did you neglect to apply to me for advice during my brother's illneſs? I offered you a decent and agreeable aſylum after his death,

why

why did you refuſe to accept of it? In ſhort, why was I wrote to, as if by your own deſire, not to give myſelf any farther trouble about you?

In replying to theſe queſtions, Erneſtina gave Henrietta to underſtand, that ſhe herſelf thought ſhe had a right to complain of neglect. The latter indeed ſaw plainly that a ſnare had been laid for her friend; and doubted not but the Marquis de Clemengis and Mrs. Dumenil had concerted a ſcheme to keep from Erneſtina, thoſe letters which would have informed her of the danger of her ſituation. This diſcovery greatly affected her. She ſighed and proceeded. I ſee we have both been deceived. Two perfidious wretches have rendered my cautions uſeleſs; they have baſely taken the advantage of circumſtances, of my being at a diſtance and of your credulity. But what is the conſequence of this diſcovery? You think your ſituation happy! What likelihood is there of reclaiming you to your former way of thinking? After having taſted the ſweets of opulence, is it eaſy to deprive one's ſelf of them? Could you renounce the Marquis de Clemengis and his intereſted beneficence? Could you avoid, de-

ſpiſe, and hate that vile man?—Renounce, avoid, deſpiſe the Marquis de Clemengis! ſaid Erneſtina, never. Wherefore ſhould I? what has he done? How hath he deſerved the odious appellations you have given him, and if deſerved are enough to inſpire one with horrour?

You perplex me aſtoniſhingly, replied Henrietta; why ſhould my diſcourſe occaſion you to be ſo much ſurprized? Don't you receive the viſits of that man? Does not he ſpend part of the day in your apartment? Is any one elſe admitted at thoſe times? Are you determined to purſue this diſhonourable commerce with him? If you love the Marquis de Clemengis; if the very idea of parting from him is ſo ſhocking to you, for what purpoſe do you come to me? Let me into the motive of this ſtrange conduct. Can you either excuſe yourſelf, or hope to make me approve it? What is it you require of me?

A diſhonourable commerce! repeated Erneſtina. Since when hath the commerce of pure and diſintereſted friendſhip been deemed diſhonourable? No body elſe is admitted into my apartment! By whom elſe am I viſited?

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The Marquis de Clemengis is my only acquaintance and friend. Having been educated at a diſtance from the world, and accuſtomed to employment, I never knew the want of company to diſſipate my thoughts; nor deſired it with a view of forming connection. Mrs. Dumenil alſo, tho' formerly ſo gay a woman, was no ſooner put into the poſſeſſion of her fortune, than ſhe thought no longer of diſſipation—Put into poſſeſſion of her fortune! cried Henrietta, interrupting her, ſhe! What fortune is this you are talking of?

Erneſtina then related the ſtory which Mrs. Dumenil had told her in the country, but without taking notice of the ſurprize it cauſed in Henrietta. You reproach me, continued ſhe, with my affection for the Marquis de Clemengis; but if you knew him, I am certain you would approve it. Yes, the thought of never ſeeing him again is indeed ſhocking to me; it wounds my heart. So pleaſing an intimacy is eſtabliſhed between us, that it conſtitutes my happineſs, and I doubt not his. The preſence of this amiable perſon gives me an inexpreſſible pleaſure. When he is near me I am happy, and I can read in his eyes that he is ſo too; in

the mean time I take delight in thinking that whatever gives me pleaſure gives him the ſame.

Henrietta now claſped her hands together and lifted up her eyes to Heaven; Good God, ſaid ſhe, am I certain of what I hear? What hopes ariſe in my heart! This ingenuous confeſſion ——O my dear Erneſtina, and art thou ſtill innocent? In the livelieſt tranſports of joy ſhe then preſſed her charming friend to her boſom. Yes, ſaid ſhe, my Erneſtina muſt be ſo; ſhe would never ſo frankly confeſs a culpable attachment. She is deceived but not ſeduced. It is not yet too late to ſave her from the danger to which her credulity has expoſed her.

Some other queſtions, with the clear and poſitive anſwers given to them, led them at length to the explanation they both ſo much deſired. The Marquis's conduct was aſtoniſhing to Henrietta; it appeared very ſingular; but ſhe knew too much of the world to judge of it very favourably.

She therefore entered into all the particulars previouſly neceſſary to her deſigns. She expatiated on the libertine and inconſiſtent manner of thinking

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in the men; and on the palpable contradiction ſubſiſting between their manners and their principles. My dear friend, ſaid ſhe to Erneſtina, indeed you don't know them: they pretend they were formed to protect our weak and timid ſex; and yet they themſelves attack us, encourage our fears, and take the advantage of our weakneſs. They have entered with each other into very unjuſt conventions to enſlave the women and ſubject them to their ſevere dominion. Nay they have impoſed on us obligations, have given us laws, and by a ſhocking and unaccountable caprice, daily ſolicit us to break them: they are perpetually laying ſnares for thoſe timid and feeble creatures, of which they pretend themſelves the counſel and ſupport.

Ah, cried Erneſtina, compare not the Marquis de Clemengis to ſuch men as theſe. Do not ſuppoſe him capable of ſuch cruel intentions. Never could he form the horrible deſign of ſeducing me, or of rendering me deſpicable or unhappy. Oh! no, his affection is pure as mine. Oh, if you did but ſee him and hear him talk—Well, ſaid Henrietta, interrupting her, I will ſee and ſpeak to him: and I wiſh that his friendſhip may, as you ſay, be as innocent and diſintereſted.

tereſted as yours: but even ſuppoſing it is, how will you excuſe the imprudence of your own conduct in this affair? In prevailing upon you to go to live at an eſtate, of which he hath lately made the purchaſe, did he not expoſe you as appearing dependent on him? In ſecluding you from every body elſe, did not you ſeem to live alone for him? He might hide the inſtances of his beneficence from you, but could he hide them from others? The character of Mrs. Dumenil is well known. Her former friends, ſurprized at not ſeeing her as uſual, naturally became deſirous of prying into the ſecret of her abſence; they diſcovered it, and have talked of it publickly. Only think what notions muſt have been entertained ſince the Marquis's return, as well by your ſervants as his. Their groſs and malicious ideas are eaſily communicated to others. Did not I myſelf believe you guilty? Mr. de Clemengis is your friend, you ſay. No Erneſtina, no, he is not. The man who will ſacrifice our reputation to his own pleaſures or amuſements, cannot be a friend. He cannot entertain a pure affection. But you weep, continued ſhe, you ſigh, and do not hear me.

Yes,

Yes, I have heard but too much, ſaid Erneſtina. You have deſtroyed my peace of mind; you have deprived me of the happineſs of my life. Ah! wherefore have you diſſipated ſo flattering an illuſion, ſaid ſhe, hiding her face, now bathed in tears, in the boſom of her friend. O my dear Henrietta, forgive me; pardon my grief; let me indulge it, for I cannot applaud your prudence; I cannot be thankful for your goodneſs. Ah why muſt I be undeceived, when my deception made me ſo happy? Oh! how I hate the world, its cuſtoms, its prejudices, and its malicious obſervations! What is the world to me, who never ſee it? Why am I to ſacrifice my happineſs to its falſe and abſurd opinions? Ah! what are to me its vain and raſh concluſions, ſo long as I am innocent, and my heart hath nothing with which to reproach me?

You trouble and afflict me, ſaid Henrietta, to ſee you ſo attached to the Marquis. Cannot I try to reſtore you to yourſelf, without ſo grievouſly wounding your heart? Ceaſe, however, to grieve mine with your lamentations. Wherefore theſe tears? You are at liberty, Erneſtina. Think not that I aſſume the prerogative of

laying you under any conſtraint, or of depriving you of a felicity of which you ſo ſenſibly regret the loſs. You may ſtill enjoy it. Nothing oppoſes your inclination. Forget that you have ſeen me; forget the officious efforts of my friendſhip. Go, return to that vile woman who hath baſely aſſiſted in furniſhing you with the means of this tranſitory felicity. It is not of me, it is of her, you have reaſon to complain: it is that inconſiderate creature, who is the real cauſe of your preſent mortification. May God grant that ſhe be not one day the cauſe of your ſhame and remorſe.

Shame and remorſe, cried Erneſtina; O my dear Henrietta, do not thus deſpiſe your unhappy friend. Be not offended at my complaints. I am weak and perhaps in the wrong; my heart is ſo oppreſſed with grief that my ſpirit ſinks within me. Bid me not return again to her who hath already deceived me: I give myſelf entirely to you, to your advice, direction and friendſhip. Alas! I regret not the manner in which I lived, or the loſs of a fortune; but only that of my amiable, my ſincere, my affectionate friend. Imprudent as he may be in your eyes, he is ſtill reſpectable in mine;

nor can I forget that it was his generous hand who ſecretly furniſhed me with every thing, without requiring any kind of acknowledgement. And can I conſent to afflict this kind friend, ſo worthy of my eſteem and attachment, to fly from him, to leave him abruptly, and to cauſe him the ſame diſtreſs I experience myſelf.

Not at all, my dear Erneſtina, replied Henrietta. On the contrary we will ſee him, talk to him, and bring him to approve of your reſolution to leave Mrs. Dumenil. Who requires you to renounce the innocent pleaſure you may receive in the viſits of Mr. de Clemengis? When you no longer ſubſiſt on his bounty, but have choſen a decent aſylum, it will be both eaſy and lawful for you to cultivate this friendſhip which ſeems ſo dear to you. Write to the Marquis, and deſire him to come hither immediately. By this means you will prevent that inquietude which you fear to give him; and in a moment's converſation with him I ſhall diſcover his ſentiments. I hope he will not diſapprove my advice; but if he ſhould, you will then be your own miſtreſs to follow his.

Erneſtina took up the pen, and with a trembling hand wrote as follows.

'I have juſt now been informed, that I owe 'neither gratitude nor reſpect to Mrs. Dume-'nil: look for me no more, therefore, at the 'houſe of that woman, which I ſhall never en-'ter more. Can it be that you, for whom 'I have entertained a twelvemonth paſt the 'ſincereſt friendſhip and the moſt cordial af-'fection, can be after all baſe and deceitful? 'If you are not, and can juſtify yourſelf in 'the opinion of a worthy woman, come to 'Miſs Dumenil. It is with her that I expect 'you with fear and impatience. I wiſh, I hope, 'I believe you to be deſerving of the ſenti-'ments I have for you. Come and declare to 'my friend, my only friend, whether or not 'you have deceived me.'

The Marquis de Clemengis had juſt arrived from Verſailles, and was thinking of paying a viſit to Erneſtina, when Henrietta's ſervant brought him the letter. He opened it without heſitation, and preſently appeared before Henrietta, with all that noble confidence, which ariſes

ariſes from a conſciouſneſs of having done nothing to infringe the laws of virtue and honour.

He was ſurprized, on entering the room, to find her alone: but it ſeems Erneſtina was retired into a cloſet where ſhe might hear all that paſſed. It was the firſt time ſhe ever avoided the preſence of the Marquis, or felt an emotion at his approach that was not mixed with pleaſure.

Henrietta no ſooner caſt her eyes on the Marquis, than ſhe became at once more indulgent to the weakneſs of her friend. How was it poſſible ſo charming a figure ſhould not make a lively impreſſion on the heart of a young female, ſo little guarded againſt the paſſions, and ſo uſed to purſue the dictates of her own inclinations! In a word, Henrietta admired the perſon of the Marquis, and was in hopes his diſpoſition might agree with his figure. You will forgive me, Sir, ſaid ſhe, for entering without leave into your ſecrets, and for preſuming to call you to account for a behaviour, the apparent irregularity of which is doubtleſs authorized by the ſecret motives of your conduct. Have you

any objection, Sir, to acquaint me with your real deſigns on Erneſtina?

Really, Madam, replied the Marquis, very frankly, I have no deſigns at all upon her; and you cannot conceive how much you embarraſs me by a queſtion, which I have aſked myſelf a thouſand times, without being able to reſolve it. I wiſh the eaſe, the happineſs of Erneſtina, and have taken ſome meaſures to enſure it. My heart is ready to avow theſe deſigns; nothing more. And now, Madam, may I preſume to aſk you in my turn, what appears ſo irregular in my behaviour, and what you think exceptionable in my conduct?

I am ſorry, very ſorry, Sir, replied Henrietta, that you ſhould conceive yourſelf ſecure from reproach, in expoſing the reputation of a young perſon whoſe diſcretion and character is her only ſupport. What right, Sir, had you to ſeparate her from me, to deprive her of my advice, and to engage her to quit a peaceful and ſimple way of life, to give her a taſte for the pleaſures of a tranſitory opulence, and to induce her perhaps to ſecure their continuation by a ſacrifice of her virtue? How! Sir, do

you

you reproach yourſelf with nothing, when you have been pleaſed to inſpire her with a paſſion, that lays her under the cruel neceſſity of being either criminal or unhappy?

This laſt reproach, Madam, indeed affects me, ſaid the Marquis. I own I deſerve it, and often have made it to myſelf. I ought not, in our preſent ſituation, to have excited or cheriſhed a paſſion, which cannot be gratified without one of us making too great a ſacrifice. But have I endeavoured to ſeduce her? Have I deceived her by magnificent promiſes? Have I given her falſe hopes, or abuſed her credulity? Have I inflamed her heart with paſſionate profeſſions? Nay, have I even preſumed ſimply to avow my ſentiments for her? Content with the pleaſure of loving her, and charmed with the delight of pleaſing, I enjoyed a happineſs, perhaps unknown to the generality of mankind: Erneſtina partook of it: but you, Madam, by this fatal explanation, have taken it from us both.

Henrietta, a little embarraſſed at this unexpected reproach, would not let the Marquis ſuppoſe that an impertinent or officious zeal had induced

induced her to pry into this intrigue; but told him the circumſtances of her meeting with Erneſtina at the play the preceding evening.

I have no objection, Madam, ſaid the Marquis, to your knowing every particular of my connection with Erneſtina: nor do I diſpute your intereſt in a young perſon of whom you have taken care ſo many years. My deſign, in raiſing her to a ſituation above mediocrity, was only to do that for a modeſt and beautiful young woman, which my equals do every day in favour of meanneſs, vice and impudence. Your friend doth not enjoy a *tranſitory opulence*, ſhe is rich, free and independent. Having met with a conſtant run of good fortune at play laſt winter, I found myſelf poſſeſſed of a very conſiderable ſum, before I ſet out for Italy. This ſum, therefore, I determined to diſpoſe of in favour of the amiable pupil of your brother. My deſign was to put it into your hands; but your departure obliged me to take other meaſures. By the advice of Mrs. Dumenil, I depoſited part of Erneſtina's fortune in the ſame hands, into which you yourſelf committed the legacy of her former friend. The eſtate where ſhe lately reſided, is her own, it was purchaſed

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in her name, and by the ſame perſon. If I have concealed my part in this affair from your young friend, it was from a motive which I think you cannot blame. Now, Madam, you know the whole. Judge of it as you think proper, and inform me if the myſtery of my conduct be ſufficiently cleared up; and whether or no I deſerved, that Erneſtina ſhould aſk me if I was treacherous and deceitful.

Henrietta was ſilent for ſome time: the noble frankneſs of the Marquis de Clemengis, his generoſity, and the diſintereſtedneſs of his paſſion appeared to her altogether new and ſingular. The great world, in which ſhe had lived from her infancy, afforded nothing like it. She began to look upon her friend Erneſtina with a kind of veneration; but endeavouring ſtill to obtain farther aſſurance of her not being deceived; And will you conſent, Sir, ſaid ſhe, that Erneſtina ſhall poſſeſs theſe marks of your generoſity in the convent to which I deſign this evening to conduct her?

Doubtleſs, replied the Marquis, ſhe is at liberty to enjoy them wherever they will make her moſt happy. Have I conferred an obliga-

tion.

tion on her to lay her under any reſtraint? By no means. No. I again repeat it, ſhe is entirely free and independent; and I ſhould deſpiſe myſelf if I were capable of aſſuming any authority over her.

Henrietta then roſe up, and running into the cloſet, took Erneſtina by the hand; and, conducting her to the Marquis, There, ſaid ſhe, give thanks to your amiable, your generous protector, whoſe bounties you need not bluſh to receive, and from whom you have nothing to fear. You was not born perhaps to accept them, but the gifts of friendſhip cannot debaſe the receiver.

Erneſtina having heard what had paſſed, was affected with a tenderneſs which ſhe durſt not otherwiſe indulge than by her tears.

In the mean time the Marquis addreſſed himſelf to her thus. Your friend, Erneſtina, hath only anticipated a propoſition, which I intended myſelf to make you in a few days. The continual complaints of Mrs. Dumenil, and her obſtinately perſiſting to introduce you to the world, would have obliged me to deſire you would leave

leave her. Your friend hath therefore ſpared me the embarraſſment of an explanation I wanted to come to; and which I dreaded to make. But, wherefore do you weep? continued he, in a tender and affecting tone. Have you any objection to the aſylum that is propoſed for you?

Oh, Sir, replied Erneſtina, how ſhould I object to an aſylum that you have made choice of? I ſhall always be governed by the advice of this lady, and ſubmit to thoſe injunctions which you condeſcend to impoſe. Thoſe ſhall be the rule of my life.

Shall I lay injunctions on my dear Erneſtina? cried the Marquis. What kind of diſcourſe is this? Can I hear it without concern? Pray, Madam, ſaid he, turning to Henrietta, with an air of tenderneſs and even ſorrow, pray prevail on your friend to treat me with more kindneſs.

Erneſtina held forth her hand and would have ſpoke, but the emotions of her heart, ariſing from the apprehenſion of ſeeing the Marquis no more, bound up her tongue. Some half words mingled with ſighs, ſufficiently ſpoke her mind

to

to the Marquis. He was moved, took her hand, preſſed it ſoftly and kiſſed it. We will not be parted, ſays he, I will viſit you often, and you ſhall be always dear to me. Dry up your tears, and look up with thoſe charming eyes, on two perſons by whom you are ſincerely beloved. Do me the favour to approve my conduct to your friend, in that I have never indulged myſelf in aſking any thing which ſhould make you caſt them down in her preſence.

Henrietta joined with the Marquis in endeavouring to comfort Erneſtina, and concerted together the proper meaſures for rendering the new ſituation of this amiable girl agreeable. She herſelf made choice of the abbey Montmartre, and deſired to retire thither. The Marquis immediately undertook to diſpatch her maid to her, being the only domeſtick ſhe choſe to keep, and to ſave her the embarraſſment of apologizing to Mrs. Dumenil for ſo abrupt a ſeparation. At the Marquis's deſire Henrietta conſented to take charge of Erneſtina's moſt valuable effects, which were afterwards conveyed to the abbey. She undertook alſo the ſettlement of her friend's affairs, as well as the offer made her by the Marquis of keeping the title deeds of her eſtate.

In

In taking theſe meaſures, which were to deprive the Marquis of the pleaſure of ſeeing Erneſtina when he pleaſed, he endeavoured to appear tranquil; but, being little accuſtomed to diſguiſe the emotions of his heart, his looks diſcovered the trouble and agitation he was under. Taking both the hands of Erneſtina, and looking at her with inexpreſſible tenderneſs, O my charming friend, ſays he, forget not a man, who hath paſſed ſo many days in your company, and yet ſuppreſs the ardour of a paſſion whoſe object affords him ſo natural an excuſe. I love you, you were ignorant of it; it gives me pleaſure to confeſs it, to repeat that confeſſion. Yes, I love you, I adore you! What pains it hath coſt me to remain ſo long ſilent! I applaud myſelf for having ſhown you that reſpect; the more ardent my deſires, the more your ſenſibility and innocence preſented the flattering idea of an aſſured triumph; the greater was the victory I obtained over myſelf. If you think you owe any return to ſo tender, ſo real a friendſhip, grant me the recompenſe due to ſo difficult a taſk, ſo conſtant a reſerve. Ceaſe to afflict yourſelf; diſſipate that cruel ſorrow in which you indulge yourſelf; let me ſee no more traces of it in thoſe lovely eyes. You cannot

but

but know all my happineſs depends on that of Erneſtina.

Without waiting for an anſwer, the Marquis took leave and departed. Turning back, however, as he went out, he aſked Henrietta if it was permitted him to ſee her again. Henrietta, good-natured, ſenſible and virtuous without rudeneſs, diſdained a ſeverity which is too often affected, always diſguſting, and more apt to render prudence inconvenient than reſpectable. She did not think ſhe ought to deprive the Marquis therefore of the ſight of Erneſtina, but anſwered with an air of chearfulneſs and good-nature, that ſhe ſhould always receive his viſits with pleaſure.

Henrietta was obliged herſelf to go down to dinner, but did not preſs her friend to appear at preſent before her couſin. In her abſence Erneſtina was ſerved, but could not be prevailed on to eat any thing. On Henrietta's return, ſhe ſaw her indeed quite dejected, and in tears. What can be the meaning, ſaid ſhe, of this increaſe of ſorrow? What is the cauſe of this continued grief? I know not, replied Erneſtina, I really am ignorant why my ſoul is ſo cruelly oppreſſed. There

is

is nothing that I either wiſh or hope for. My preſent happineſs appears to be the height of human felicity. It fills my whole heart, and hath left me nothing to deſire beyond what I poſſeſs. And yet, my dear Henrietta, I ſeem as if I had ſuffered ſome great loſs. Yes, I have been deprived of——what! not even my wiſhes. But what a painful light have thoſe words of the Marquis caſt upon my mind, when he ſaid, *our preſent ſituation does not permit us to be happy unleſs one of us make too great a ſacrifice to the other.* Here ſhe pauſed, ſighed, and caſt down her eyes, for fear of meeting thoſe of Henrietta. No, my dear Clemengis, ſaid ſhe, you ſhall never offer up too great a ſacrifice to make Erneſtina happy. She does not require it. She does by no means covet an happineſs derogatory from your honour. My eyes are now open: I ſee indeed that every thing divides us. But why ſhould I feel ſo ſenſible a ſorrow, in renouncing hopes which I never entertained?—The civilities of Henrietta, the viſits of the Marquis, time and reflection, at length diſſipated the grief of Erneſtina, to which a ſoothing melancholy ſucceeded and became habitual.

After

After living about a month with Henrietta, ſhe retired to the convent, where a convenient and agreeable apartment was provided for her; in the preparation and diſpoſition of which the ſolicitudes of a lover were ſufficiently conſpicuous; the Marquis having furniſhed her a little library, containing a ſelect collection of books for the amuſement and improvement of her leiſure hours. She continued to take leſſons in muſick, and took care not to neglect her talent for painting, which was now become delightful to her, from the pleaſure ſhe took in repeatedly copying the picture of the Marquis.

Henrietta viſited her often, and was ſometimes accompanied by the Marquis, who ſeldom indulged himſelf in going alone. From the firſt moment, indeed, that he determined to replace Erneſtina under the care of Henrietta, he endeavoured to overcome his paſſion, from the conſideration that he could not make her happy, without riſking the demolition of his fortune, by ſhowing diſreſpect to his uncle, and to a great family, whoſe alliance it was neceſſary for him to cultivate. On taking a review of the ſtate of his lawſuit, on which his hopes

hopes ſo much depended, he found that no certain judgment could as yet be made of its ſucceſs. If he ſhould at once loſe his cauſe and his uncle's favour, he would of courſe be reduced to mediocrity, be obliged to quit the ſervice and leave the court; in which caſe how could he be certain that his paſſion, weakened by poſſeſſion, might not be extinguiſhed? How could he tell if his conſtancy would render his pleaſures laſting, or that the ſweets of matrimony would be ſufficient to efface the bitter remembrance of the ſacrifices he made to love? Who could aſſure him that he ſhould continue to think as he did at preſent? Perhaps he might one day become unjuſt enough to ceaſe to love the innocent cauſe of his ruin; to blame her for his own imprudence; and thus to make her unhappy by depriving her of that peace and tranquillity of which he himſelf ſhould aſſure her.

Theſe reflections confirmed him in the reſolution of vanquiſhing his paſſion. He uſed his endeavours and did himſelf an extreme violence in paſſing ſeveral days without ſeeing or writing to Erneſtina. Reproaching himſelf however, for that apparent negligence, he flew to her and en-

joyed the intoxicating pleaſure of her preſence. He found her penſive and dejected, and blamed himſelf for giving her ſuſceptible heart a moment's uneaſineſs.

The gentle Erneſtina was afraid to complain of him: but her languiſhing looks, her ſighs, and the queſtions ſhe put to him, diſcovered her fear of being no longer beloved. At once loſing ſight of all his projects, the Marquis now thought of nothing elſe but aſſuring her of his paſſion; and, giving himſelf entirely up to the pleaſure of avowing his ſentiments, they paſſed together many delightful moments, putting them in mind of their former hours of ſimplicity and liberty.

Three months paſſed away in this manner without effecting any change in their circumſtances. At the return of Spring the Marquis prepared himſelf to join his regiment; both of them feeling a ſenſible pain at their approaching ſeparation. Their adieus were long and tender, they wept; and were ſo far from mutually exhorting each other to check their paſſion, that they repeated their vows of eternal affection.

Soon

Soon after the departure of the Marquis, Erneſtina began to be tired of her retreat; and grew deſirous of going into the country, to live in that agreeable manſion which had been preſented to her by her lover. Henrietta repreſented that it was improper for her to reſide there by herſelf: this objection chagrined Erneſtina, but it was ſoon obviated. An accident in which her goodnature induced her to intereſt herſelf, provided her a companion.

There was in the convent one Madam de Rancy, an agreeable widow lady, about ſix and thirty years of age, who, by various ſiniſter accidents, was reduced to very indifferent circumſtances, ſupported only by a ſmall annuity dependent on the ſecurity of a private perſon, who juſt at this time ſtopped payment and abſconded; making off to Holland. This Madam de Rancy had ſhewn a good deal of complaiſance and friendſhip for Erneſtina, ever ſince ſhe had been in the convent. Affected therefore at the misfortunes which had happened to her, Erneſtina, whoſe heart was ever open to relieve diſtreſs, determined to beſtow on her part of what ſhe herſelf had received from the benevolence of her friends. To this end ſhe conſulted with

Henrietta, and transferred to this unfortunate widow the little inheritance which ſhe enjoyed from Madam du Freſnoy; which with a ſmall addition Erneſtina herſelf made to it, more than made up for the loſs ſhe had ſuſtained.

A ſenſe of gratitude now added to the friendſhip which this worthy woman had conceived for Erneſtina, made her ſoon look upon her in the light of a beloved daughter. It was with pleaſure, therefore, ſhe received the propoſal of attaching herſelf entirely to her young benefactor, to live with her, and to accompany her to her eſtate in the country: to which they ſet out about a month after the departure of M. de Clemengis.

Erneſtina was tranſported with the pleaſure of ſeeing again a place rendered ſo dear to her: nor did ſhe conceal from Madam de Rancy the ſecret cauſe of that pleaſure. On the contrary, ſhe made her a confident, ſhowed her all the Marquis's letters, her anſwers to them, entertained her with her ſentiments for that amiable perſon, told her of her obligations to him, of her gratitude, of her love, and of the pleaſure ſhe took in thinking of him. And when this friend,

friend, at any time, aſked her, to what her affections might conduce, what hopes ſhe could have of the Marquis? ſighs and tears only interrupted the effuſions of her heart. She confeſſed ſhe had no hopes. Without rejecting or oppoſing the prudent advice of Madam de Rancy; without contraverting her reflections, ſhe liſtened to them; admitted the juſtice of her obſervations, and at the ſame time let her ſee they had no effect on her. Nothing could prevail on her to forget the Marquis; to renounce the pleaſure ſhe felt in loving him, and the certainty of pleaſing him.

Toward the end of the ſummer, Henrietta being juſt on her return to Brittany, had a mind, before ſhe went, to ſpend ſome days with Erneſtina. This prudent friend, before ſhe left her, adviſed her by all means not to wait for the Marquis's return in this agreeable ſolitude; but obtained a promiſe from her that ſhe would ſoon return to her convent.

This promiſe, however, ſoon involved poor Erneſtina in great perplexity. The Marquis was on his return, entreated her to paſs the autumn in the country, and to in-

dulge him in the pleaſure of ſeeing her again with that uninterrupted freedom, which ſhe had ſo much reaſon to think he would not abuſe. The preſence of Madam de Rancy, he ſaid, would be ſufficient to guard her againſt cenſorious and malicious obſervations. He repeated the ſame entreaties in all his letters, and preſſed them with ſo much ardour, that his whole happineſs ſeemed to depend on her granting his requeſt.

Erneſtina had not power to refuſe a favour ſo ardently deſired; I owe him, ſaid ſhe to Madam de Rancy, every thing in the world; and ſhall I grant him nothing? In my refuſing this requeſt, will he not have reaſon to accuſe me of ingratitude. Is it for me to think of giving him uneaſineſs? No, I will grant every thing to his requeſt, which honour does not forbid me. Why ſhould I ſacrifice to the fear of being unjuſtly cenſured the real ſatisfaction of giving him pleaſure? You, my good friend, will protect me againſt myſelf, you will diſcharge the office of a vigilant and tender mother, by never quitting me, but remaining a witneſs to my conduct. This will be ſufficient to juſtify me in the eyes of Henrietta; and what

ſignifies

ſignifies the reſt of the world? The eſteem of my friends, and a conſciouſneſs of my own innocence, are enough for my tranquility. Madam de Rancy pleaded in vain againſt her fixed reſolution, and the Marquis de Clemengis had the pleaſure on his arrival of finding Erneſtina ſtill in the country, and to be aſſured that he owed that happineſs to love. He continued to enjoy this pleaſure for ſeveral days, without ſeeming to deſire any greater. But how difficult is it for an avowed paſſion to confine itſelf within the bounds of friendſhip? One deſire ſatisfied naturally leads on to another, our wiſhes are multiplied, and our hopes increaſed. The immenſe diſtance, which ſeemed to ſeparate us from a point in view hardly perceived, by degrees inſenſibly decreaſes, and the mind fixes itſelf on an object which we hardly dare to look on.

The Marquis being now at liberty to prolong his viſits, and to ſpend great part of the day with Erneſtina, began to be ſometimes out of humour. The continual preſence of Madam de Rancy laid him under reſtraint, and her caution never to leave her young friend for a moment, made her very diſagreeable to him. Why

do you accuſtom this woman, ſaid he one day to Erneſtina, to follow you up and down with ſo much aſſiduity? She never once permits you to loſe ſight of her. Do you require it of her? Are you then afraid of me? Do you ceaſe to love me? Elſe why theſe precautions to guard yourſelf againſt me? Is this Erneſtina, who betrays an injurious diſtruſt of me? What coldneſs! what reſerve! No. I ſee your friendſhip is no longer the ſame. Alas! thoſe times are paſt, thoſe happy times, in which you accompanied my ſteps, in theſe very paths, with pleaſure; in which your arm reſted upon mine, while we traverſed theſe groves together with mutual delight! O, my dear friend, is it then true that you are actually changed?

Theſe reproaches affected Erneſtina, and drew from her a flood of tears, though not the ſlighteſt complaint; while ſhe ſupported the melancholy uniformity of theſe converſations with a patient indulgence. In the mean time the mournful dejection of the Marquis, excited her fears for his health and life. I ſhall not importune you long, ſaid he to her now and then, with his eyes ſwimming in tears. She began now to

repent,

repent, therefore, of that complaiſance, of which ſhe did not foreſee the conſequences. My imprudence, ſaid ſhe to Madam de Rancy, hath only irritated a paſſion that was long ſuppreſſed: I then, alas, had only experienced the ſweets of what I now feel all the bitterneſs. Madam de Rancy, alarmed at the danger of her young friend, preſſed her to return to Montmartre, to which Erneſtina conſented. But before her departure ſhe wrote to the Marquis, and ſent her letter by an expreſs, the moment ſhe entered her convent. He opened it with impatience, and was aſtoniſhed at its contents, which were as follows.

A Letter from ERNESTINA *to the Marquis de* CLEMENGIS.

" How unhappy am I, Sir, to give you cauſe of complaint, to be under the neceſſity of accuſing myſelf of your grief, and to ſuſtain the ſelf-reproach of reducing you to your preſent unhappy ſituation! Could I have thought, Sir, that I ſhould have thus afflicted you, who aſſured myſelf that your happineſs was the only object of my views! Alas, by what fatality is it that ſuch happineſs ſeems to depend on the

miſtaken conduct of a girl you once reſpected! Be yourſelf the judge in your own cauſe and in mine; determine for yourſelf between the hearts of both. My reſerve hath, it ſeems, offended you! But conſider, Sir, is it proper for me to treat you now with a familiarity, for which my ignorance was formerly an excuſe. I ventured to look upon you a long time as a brother; the diſproportion in our fortunes did not affect me; and in thoſe happy times there was nothing to check the ſallies of my innocent affection.

"I am not changed. Indeed I am not. Why do you perſiſt in thinking I am? It is not you, Sir, that I am afraid of; it is myſelf. I am young, I owe every thing to your goodneſs, I love you. Yes, Sir, I repeat it with pleaſure, I love you: nor do I bluſh to love you. The firſt moment I ſaw you, gave birth to a paſſion, which hath ſince grown to ſuch a height as to conſtitute the happineſs of my life. So many benefits, and thoſe ſo generouſly beſtowed on me, have ſecured me a peaceful competence; but the love with which you have inſpired me, is my ſovereign felicity. To have you perpetually in my thoughts, to employ them only on

the means of preſerving your friendſhip and meriting the eſteem of ſo reſpectable a friend, to ſee you now and then and read in your eyes the joy that my company gives you. In this conſiſted my ſupreme delight. Ah, why ſhould a felicity ſo uncommon be ever deſtroyed? Will you not reſtore it me? Ah! no. It is no longer in your power to reſtore it!

"You was pleaſed to ſay, *you ſhould not importune me long.* How cruel the expreſſion! I cannot ſupport the conſciouſneſs of making you unhappy. It wounds, it rends my very heart. In returning to my convent, and leaving the place where I ſaw you without conſtraint, I have only followed the prudent advice of others. But think not, therefore, that I fly from you, or pretend to ſet a barrier between us. No, I am ready to quit this aſylum, if you will have it ſo, and ſubject my conduct entirely to your direction.

"If it be neceſſary, in order to prolong your days, that I muſt become deſpicable, that I muſt give up my innocence, my own eſteem, and perhaps yours, I will not heſitate to prefer your intereſt to my own. Determine the

deſtiny of a girl, diſpoſed entirely to yourſelf, and ready to ſacrifice every thing to your happineſs. But before you accept of ſo great a ſacrifice, permit me to put into your hands all the gifts you have made me. To keep them, would be to have it thought that you enriched only to ruin me. Let us ſave at leaſt your honour and a ſmall part of mine. Never let me be reproached with having the meanneſs to receive the price of my innocence. On theſe conditions, Sir, the affectionate, the unhappy Erneſtina, will purſue that conduct which your anſwer to this letter ſhall preſcribe."

Good God, cried the Marquis, after having read this epiſtle, how can I have provoked this charming girl to write to me in this manner? What a ſtrange propoſal is this! But what goodneſs, what tenderneſs, what generoſity doth ſhe not diſplay even in thus offering to make a ſacrifice of her virtue, and even herſelf. No, amiable Erneſtina, I will never abuſe thy love, thy noble confidence. Thou haſt nothing to fear from thy lover, thy friend, thy grateful friend. Periſh the unjuſt, the cruel man, who ſhall dare to build his own felicity on the fond-

neſs

neſs and condeſcenſion of a tender creature, capable of forgetting herſelf to make him happy!

The Marquis de Clemengis haſtened to anſwer this letter, in order to quiet the agitated mind of Erneſtina. The perturbation of his ſpirits did not permit him to ſtand much upon elegance or order. He thanked her for giving him ſo extraordinary a proof of her affection; and gently reproached her for ſuſpecting him capable of a deſign which never entered into his head. How could you ever think, ſaid he, that your friend was deſirous of becoming a tyrant? He then finiſhed his letter with ſome indiſtinct and ſorrowful expreſſions, which ſeemed to intimate an intention of writing to her in the evening, promiſing to communicate ſomething which he could not then explain, and which he was unhappy, very unhappy, to be forced to acquaint her with.

Erneſtina and Madam de Rancy were together when this letter from the Marquis came to hand. She took it trembling, and was ſome time before ſhe ventured to open it, during which a mortal paleneſs overſpread her whole countenance. Here, ſaid ſhe to Madam de Rancy,

Rancy, is incloſed the deſtiny of Erneſtina. Did' you but know what I have done.——Ah! what have I done! What does he ſay to me? I am certainly undone.

Madam De Rancy, ignorant of the cauſe of her fears, was herſelf aſtoniſhed at her friend's conſternation. At length Erneſtina broke open the ſeal, and caſting her timid eyes on the well-known characters, ſhe preſently bedewed them with tears of joy that plenteouſly flowed from her eyes. Then kiſſing this conſolatory epiſtle and preſſing it to her heart, ſhe cried out, O my reſpectable friend, forgive me.——No. I ought not to have ſuſpected you. Then diſcovering to Madam de Rancy the cauſe of her apprehenſions, ſhe communicated to the heart of this ſympathizing friend a part of thoſe emotions which agitated hers.

On a ſecond peruſal of the Marquis's letter, Erneſtina again began to be uneaſy. What can it be, ſaid ſhe to de Rancy, that he wants to communicate? Perhaps he is going to leave me, to renounce me for ever. Yes, every thing ſeems to forbode a cruel ſeparation. What can be the meaning of theſe expreſſions, "When

"I ſaid

" I ſaid to you I ſhould not importune you
" much longer, I was far from meaning to ex-
" cite thoſe fatal ideas, which I ſee too well
" ſuggeſted themſelves. I have both ſought
" and ſhunned an opportunity to explain to you
" the meaning of thoſe expreſſions. Alas! my
" dear Erneſtina, what a circumſtance have I
" to communicate! What a ſacrifice doth my
" duty require! I am no longer permitted to
" live for myſelf, I am no longer permitted to
" hope I may be happy."

Alas! cried ſhe, I am going to loſe him, my heart forebodes it. Why may he not live happy? Why may he not ſee me? Why may he not love me? How can the ſame ſentiments produce ſuch different effects? My paſſion is to me felicity, why ſhould his be the miſery of his life?

It was with impatience ſhe expected the hour, at which ſhe imagined ſhe ſhould receive a viſit from the Marquis. The time paſſed away ſlowly, the day cloſed, and to increaſe her uneaſineſs, no Marquis appeared. The next morning, however, ſhe received a letter from him; which breaking open with precipitation, eagerly

to confirm her apprehenſions, ſhe found the following.

From the Marquis de CLEMENGIS *to* ERNESTINA.

"My dear Erneſtina! after the affecting proof you have given me of your paſſion, how ſhall I acquaint you, without dying with grief, of the neceſſity of my departure, and the event which muſt ſucceed. Muſt I leave you! Muſt I bid you an eternal adieu! Muſt I wound your heart with the ſame ſhaft that rends mine to pieces.

"Oh, thou moſt amiable girl, formed for the happineſs of my life, worthy of the moſt ſplendid fortune!——Ah wherefore doth not mine depend on myſelf! My duty, my gratitude, the engagements I long ſince entered into, all ſubvert my hopes. But what hopes had I? How could I ſo vainly flatter myſelf?—Wherefore did I induce you to encourage a fruitleſs paſſion? Will you not deſpiſe me for it? Will you not for ever hate me? My dear, my tender friend, deign but to diſpell my fears; tell me but that you forgive me. Refuſe me not a con-

conſolation ſo neceſſary to the ſupport of my afflicted heart. The misfortune of my life is at length determined. My uncle hath removed the obſtacles that oppoſed my marriage; he compells, he forces me to go and make my addreſſes to Madam de St. André. Within an hour's time, I ſhall ſet out with her father, who will conduct me to an eſtate where the Marſhal de St. André is waiting for us. His daughter comes tomorrow from the convent. We are to be introduced to each other, and our hands are to be joined forthwith, without any concern about the union of our hearts. O, my dear Erneſtina, I am going to be united; to be united for ever! and it is not to you.——

"I imagined I ſhould have yet long enjoyed my liberty. It was purpoſed to await the deciſion of my law-ſuit before the parliament. The uncertainty of my right to a rich inheritance, and to immenſe arrears, had delayed the conſent of the Marſhal de St. André. The liberality of my uncle at this time diſtreſſes me beyond conception. He hath by donation ſecured to me his whole eſtate, and I have no farther hopes.

"Shall

" Shall I beg of you to forget me? Oh? no. I cannot wiſh you ſhould forget me; I cannot deſire to forget you. Your charming idea will be always preſent to me, always dear to my heart: I ſhall think of you inceſſantly; I ſhall write to you, I ſhall entertain you on the topic of my eſteem, my friendſhip, and perhaps in ſpite of myſelf of my love. Not that I ſhall recall it to mind to induce you to partake of it again; but to convince you that time cannot extinguiſh or diminiſh it. May your life be peaceful and happy; let the remembrance of a ſincere, a true and conſtant friend ſometimes awaken a ſigh; but let it be a ſigh of tenderneſs, not of grief.——I cannot longer reſtrain from tears; they force themſelves from my eyes, they blot the paper on which I am writing. O my generous friend, you I know will weep too; but may your tears be leſs bitter than mine! I love you, I adore you, I yet muſt avoid, muſt loſe you: I am the moſt unfortunate of mankind."———

The reader will judge what emotions the peruſal of this letter muſt create in the heart of the ſuſceptible Erneſtina. How often was it inter-

interrupted to give vent to her tears and ſighs! He is gone, ſaid ſhe, he hath bid me an eternal adieu! I never ſhall ſee him more. He is gone to be united to the happy bride for whom he is deſtined. He wiſhes my life may be peaceful and happy.——Alas! what peace can I enjoy at a diſtance from him? How ſhall I be happy without him!

Thus did ſhe ſpend the whole day, in lamenting the departure of the Marquis. How unkind, ſaid ſhe, to go away without ſeeing me! without ſpeaking to me; without mixing his parting tears with mine! She wept, then ſat down to write, roſe up again and tore her letter to pieces, then ſat down again, and at laſt threw down her pen. The violence of her tranſports, indeed, at length quite overpowered her; and ſhe continued ſick, languiſhing and dejected for ſeveral days. But the letters of the Marquis, the remonſtrances of Madam de Rancy, the return of Henrietta, and her friendly ſolicitudes, ſucceeded by degrees in rendering her mind more calm. She accuſtomed herſelf to ſay repeatedly that ſhe never had encouraged any hopes; ſhe ceaſed to complain of her misfortune, was willing to ſubmit to her fate, and endea-

endeavoured, by the force of reaſon, to ſupport her ſorrows with reſignation.

Two months had now ſlipt away, during which he had correſponded regularly with his amiable friend. He did not tell her that the indiſſoluble knot was tied, and ſhe was afraid to aſk and to know. But ſhe was doomed ſhortly to be informed of the deſtiny of the Marquis de Clemengis, and to feel by woful experience, that diſtreſs which attends on too tender connections.

A female relation of Henrietta's was going to be married in the country, about ten leagues from Paris. The bridegroom was rich, and as he had long ſighed for the happy moment of marriage, he determined to have a brilliant wedding. Henrietta, being invited, deſired Erneſtina to accompany her on this ſhort and pleaſant journey. She at firſt declined it, but at length gave way to the preſſing invitations of her friend. At her departure ſhe charged Madam de Rancy to ſend the Marquis's letters by expreſs, as ſoon as ſhe received them. Several days, however, had elapſed before Erneſtina received any news either of her or the Marquis.

Henri-

Henrietta did not reflect in taking her friend into the country, that of all kind of amuſements, the entertainments of a wedding were the leaſt calculated to diſſipate the peculiar concern of Erneſtina. The ſame entertainments, might ſhe ſay to herſelf, are poſſibly given at the Marſhal de St. André's; but the Marquis does not feel the joy and ſatisfaction of the bridegroom here. The Marquis is not ſo fond of his bride, he enjoys not the pleaſure of a happy lover. And yet he writes to me no more. Would you believe it, ſaid ſhe to Henrietta, that the Marquis never writes to me, now? Does he mean to deprive me of the only conſolation I have left? Ah; doubtleſs he does. He thinks no more of me; he does not even ſo much as enquire whether I am in being or not. But no matter, he will always be dear to me: my regard for him will never ceaſe. No, no, never ſhall I loſe the idea of the Marquis de Clemengis: and if the time ever ſhould come that I ſhould think of him without ſorrow, I never ſhall think of him without affection. Henrietta endeavoured to ſooth the griefs, and to calm the inquietude of her friend; but the ſituation of Erneſtina was ſoon to become ſo diſtreſsful, that neither the advice

nor

nor the ſolicitudes of friendſhip could work any effect upon her heart.

Mr. de Maugis, a friend to the bride and bridegroom, arrived that very morning in which every body was preparing to return to Paris. He was accordingly reminded of his promiſe, and reproached for not yielding to the preſſing invitations made him, to come to the wedding. To which he replied, that the accident, of which he doubted not we muſt have heard, prevented him. Upon this every body got about him; near a dozen of them aſking him at once, what had happened. What, ſaid he, with an air of ſurprize, have you not heard of the misfortune of the Count de St. Servains; that of my brother, and the baniſhment of the Marquis de Clemengis?

Erneſtina, who had juſt entered the ſaloon, was ſtruck into a ſtatue at this expreſſion; but recollecting herſelf, with all her force, liſtened with the utmoſt attention to Mr. de Maugis.

Yes, continued he, the Count de St. Servains is put under a ſtrict guard, his papers are carried off, and his effects ſeized. My brother, who

who was his confident, is alſo in cuſtody. In the mean time the nature of their crime is kept an impenetrable ſecret. Thus a man, whoſe genius and application have ſucceeded ſo happily in the adminiſtration of affairs, whoſe diſintereſtedneſs is ſo well known, and whoſe affability is univerſally engaging, is accuſed and blackened by envy. I hope, to Heaven, he will be able to confound the calumny of his enemies, and trample his baſe accuſers under foot.

I pity your brother ſincerely, ſaid the Chevalier d'Elmont, and I pity no leſs the amiable Marquis de Clemengis. He was going to be married to Madam de St. André; that marriage will now hardly take place. No, certainly, replied Mr. de Maugis, he received that mortifying news and the order to repair to Clemengis, juſt two hours before the marriage articles were to be ſigned; in conſequence of which, he himſelf haſtened to prevent the farther proceedings of the Marſhal, and diſſolved the mutual engagements.

Good God, continued the Chevalier d'Elmont, what a cruel circumſtance that the diſgrace

grace of his uncle ſhould turn out a double misfortune to him. Does not his law-ſuit come on immediately? Yes, Sir, replied M. de Maugis, and all Paris think he muſt loſe it.

During this converſation, Henrietta moved inſenſibly up to Erneſtina, and putting her hand round her waiſt, drew her out of the ſaloon, and ſupported her to her own chamber. Pale, cold and inanimate, our heroine appeared quite inſenſible of the terrible and unexpected news ſhe had heard. She threw her eyes ſtupidly around her; but could not ſpeak, and indeed hardly breathe. Henrietta urged her in vain to weep, by bathing her with her own tears: her heart was too full. At length, fixing her eyes on her friend, ſhe looked at her for ſome time, then lifting up her weak and trembling hands to Heaven, Oh, that I had died, ſaid ſhe, Oh that I had died, ere I had heard that the Marquis de Clemengis is unhappy!

Her tears now flowed in abundance, and a little relieved the oppreſſion which lay upon her ſpirits: but the moſt terrible agitation of mind, and the moſt violent exclamations of grief ſucceeded.

ceeded. Exiled! ruined! loſt! cried ſhe, the Marquis de Clemengis baniſhed!

On a ſudden, however, ſhe became quite calm—her tears ceaſed to flow, and ſhe took hold with both hands of Henrietta; then conſidering a moment, caſting her eyes down, and afterwards looking up, ſhe fetched a deep ſigh and ſeemed to heſitate about bringing out what ſhe had a mind to ſay.

Alas! my dear Henrietta, ſaid ſhe, I give you a great deal of trouble; and perhaps I am going to ſay ſomething that may offend you: but, in the name of our friendſhip, I beg of you not to oppoſe my inclinations. I have a project to which I entreat you will make no objections. Never can I abandon the Marquis de Clemengis: he is baniſhed, his marriage is broken off, and his fortune ruined. He is deſtitute of hope, afflicted and unhappy. I will immediately go to him: the ſight of me may poſſibly afford him ſome conſolation; and if I cannot conſole him, I can at leaſt ſhare in his ſorrows: I can ſigh, ſuffer and die with him. Say nothing to me. No. I charge you, ſay nothing to me on this ſubject. Tell not me of the opinions of the

world, or their cruel prejudices. I deſpiſe them when they are unjuſtly ſevere. Are there any laws upon earth more ſacred than thoſe of friendſhip? Any obligations more binding than thoſe of gratitude? To whom ought I to pay any regard? I am independent of any one; if my conduct in this particular be wrong, I myſelf will bluſh for it alone. I am determined to ſell every thing I am worth, and to convey ſecretly to the Marquis de Clemengis every thing I have received from him. How can I indeed enjoy them? I may be happy in the eyes of others, but while I am ungrateful in my own, how can I bear to live?

The ſentiments of Henrietta were too noble not to approve in part of her friend's intention. And as to that part of it which ſeemed to require the moſt conſideration, ſhe ſaw Erneſtina ſo violently bent on purſuing her own inclination, that if ſhe had undertaken to perſuade her from it, it might perhaps only be giving her uneaſineſs without prevailing on her to change her reſolution. She therefore ſaid nothing, but left her friend to put what conſtruction ſhe pleaſed on her ſilence; and both hurried away to Paris.

While

While they were on the road, Erneſtina bethought herſelf of an honeſt old man, who was concerned in the affairs of the Marquis, and was extremely attached to him. His name was Lefranc. During her reſidence with Mr. Dumenil ſhe remembered to have often ſeen him with the Marquis. Indeed the Marquis employed Dumenil at firſt on his recommendation, as he was always crying up the ingenuity and abilities of that artiſt. She recollected alſo that he lodged in the neighbourhood of her convent. Her firſt buſineſs therefore, when ſhe arrived at her convent, was to ſend a preſſing note for this man to come to her early the next morning, upon a matter of great conſequence; on which ſhe wanted to talk and conſult with him. Lefranc came at the hour appointed: but the preſence of a man, who loved the Marquis, who belonged to him, excited the moſt lively emotion in the heart of Erneſtina. She wanted to explain herſelf; ſhe begun to ſpeak; but her tears prevented her.

On the other hand, the good old man, delighted to ſee again the pupil of his old friend, aſſured her of his readineſs to ſerve her, making

a thouſand proteſtations that he would follow exactly the orders ſhe might give him. He was not ignorant how dear ſhe was to the Marquis, and thought her entitled to as much reſpect as he would have paid to his ſiſter. Erneſtina accepted his offers of ſervice, opened her whole heart to him, expatiated on the liberality of the Marquis, on the gratitude ſhe ſhould always have for him; and, putting into his hands her jewels and many other valuable moveables, ordered him to ſell them, and convey the money to the Marquis, without letting him know where it came from. After this ſhe deſired him to go to Miſs Dumenil, to conſult with her about mortgaging her eſtate, in order to add to the ſum: recommending to him in every thing diligence and ſecreſy.

Mr. Lefranc knew that Erneſtina owed her fortune to the liberality of the Marquis. But he did not know the manner in which he had obliged her. The note ſhe ſent him perſuaded him that this fortune was ſtill dependent on the Marquis, and his firſt notion, on ſeeing her ſo much afflicted, was that in the preſent circumſtances, ſhe wanted to take ſome meaſures with the Marquis to ſecure her own intereſt.

A ſur-

A ſurprize, therefore, mixed with admiration, rendered him ſilent for ſome minutes: he then looked firſt upon Erneſtina, then on the depoſit in his hands, and ſeemed to doubt whether or not he was miſtaken in what he ſaw and heard. On this Erneſtina aſked him, in a tone of impatience and inquietude, If he heſitated to oblige her. No, Madam, ſaid he, by no means, I ſhall fulfill your deſires, and perhaps do ſtill more: make yourſelf eaſy: I ſhall acquit myſelf faithfully of the charge you have entruſted me with. The Marquis hath placed his affections very worthily, and I hope that Heaven will reſtore to him his uncle, his fortune, his health, and that he will never loſe ſo affectionate, ſo reſpectable a friend as you are.

His health! ſaid Erneſtina, haſtily, interrupting him. Good God, is the Marquis ill! Don't frighten yourſelf, Madam, replied Lefranc, he has been ill, very ill indeed; but he is at preſent much better. I hope ſoon to ſee him, and if I am not diſappointed, I ſhall be at Clemengis before the week is out. Be ſatisfied, Madam, I ſhall call upon you before I go, to take your orders. I ſhall write to you, perhaps, what the fear of giving you falſe hopes, obliges me at preſent to be ſilent about. In

ſaying this he made a reſpectful bow and took his leave.

Here again was a new ſubject of ſorrow to diſtreſs poor Erneſtina. The Marquis de Clemengis, to add to his misfortune, was ill, and perhaps dangerouſly ſo. How could ſhe ſupport this terrible idea! The ſilence of Henrietta, which ſeemed to intimate that ſhe diſapproved of this ſtep, and the fear of incurring the diſpleaſure of that valuable friend, gave indeed at firſt a little irreſolution to her proceedings; but the preſent ſituation of the Marquis bore down every other conſideration. She wrote therefore to Henrietta; who determined on the receipt of her letter, to lend her a chaiſe, and to ſend one of her ſervants to go before her and to take care to provide her with poſt horſes.

At noon ſhe ſet out, in company with Madam de Rancy: but how impatient during the journey! How many ſighs! How many tears! Alas! ſaid ſhe to her companion, what would become of me if I ſhould never ſee him more! If Heaven ſhould deprive me of him by death; Oh, how ſhall I be able to ſurvive him! How live to ſay, to repeat, that he is no more.

A whole night ſpent thus in grief and lamentation, together with the fatigue of the journey, quite exhauſted her ſtrength and ſpirits, in ſo much that the ſecond day they were obliged to ſtop at a little village on the road. Here Madam de Rancy prevailed on her to take ſome little refreſhment and repoſe. A long and uninterrupted ſleep afforded her conſiderable relief, and put her in a ſituation to continue her journey the next morning: ſo that they arrived at Clemengis the ſecond day in the evening.

As many of the Marquis's ſervants knew Erneſtina, the firſt who ſet eyes on her, ran to acquaint their maſter of her arrival. The Marquis could hardly believe them. Nay, when he even ſaw her enter his room, he ſtill almoſt doubted whether it was ſhe or not. She went up to the ſide of his bed trembling, and then falling on her knees, took his hand, which he held out to her, and preſſing it in hers, bathed it with her tears. Is this Erneſtina? ſaid the Marquis, raiſing her gently up and cauſing her to ſit down by him. Doth my charming friend condeſcend to viſit me? O my dear Erneſtina! how agreeable is this ſurprize? I did not expect ſo great a favour.

Why,

Why, Sir, why did not you expect it? ſaid ſhe in a moſt affecting tone. Do you put me on a footing with thoſe friends, who forſake the unfortunate? Have you forgot that you are the whole univerſe to me? If either my company or ſervices can oblige you, ſpeak, Sir, ſpeak and I will never leave you more. Command all the moments of my life, if there ſhould be one in a day, in which my ſolicitude to pleaſe you may diſſipate the remembrance of your misfortunes, or afford one ray of comfort to your ſoul.

The face of the Marquis was covered with bluſhes at the tenderneſs of this declaration. He took the hands of Erneſtina and bathed them in burning tears. How have I ſacrificed, ſays he, the greateſt happineſs to vain titles! My moſt ardent deſires to ridiculous prejudices! Is this that amiable girl whom I would have given up for the avarice of ambition, and fooliſh pride? How generouſly hath her compaſſion induced her to follow me into this deſart? Yes, I feel already my pains grow leſs, now ſhe hath deigned to partake them. Every thing gives way to the regret I feel at not having been ſufficiently attentive to her goodneſs.

Erneſtina was going to reply, when a confuſed noiſe was heard without of ſeveral people ſpeak-

ing together. The door was opened abruptly, and Mr. Lefranc was rather brought, than introduced, by the Marquis's ſervants; who all in one voice cried out, Your law-ſuit is gained, Sir, your law-ſuit is gained. The Count de St. Servains is cleared, and his accuſers arreſted.

How! cried the Marquis, my uncle juſtified, and my law-ſuit gained! I may then follow the dictates of my own heart, and reward ſo much love, generoſity and virtue. Come, my dear Erneſtina, ſaid he, come to the arms of your huſband. Here, my dear children, continued he, addreſſing himſelf to his ſervants, who ſhed tears of joy, here is your miſtreſs; then taking hold of the hand of Lefranc, and you, my zealous and honeſt friend, ſaid he, be you the firſt to congratulate the Marchioneſs de Clemengis.

Nothing but confuſed exclamations of joy were now to be heard in the chamber. Erneſtina was beloved and reſpected; and merited the good fortune ſhe experienced. Madam de Rancy lifted up her hands, gave thanks to Heaven, and embracing Erneſtina, pronounced a tender benediction on her and the Marquis.

Mr.

Mr. Lefranc now betrayed the ſecret he was entruſted with, and related to the Marquis the generoſity of Erneſtina; while ſhe alone, ſtill apprehenſive for the Marquis's health, forbore to indulge her joy. She was aſſured, however, that though the Marquis was a little weak, he was much mended, and that the pleaſure he now experienced would ſoon entirely reſtore him.

But let us ſpare the reader, already perhaps ſufficiently tired, the trouble of entering into a detail of particulars more tedious than intereſting. It is eaſy to conceive what muſt be the happineſs of thoſe two lovers. The Count de St. Servains, being revenged of his enemies, was reinſtated in the miniſtry, and forgave his nephew for contracting a marriage by which he was made happy. Henrietta partook of the felicity of her friend. Madam de Rancy returned to her retreat in the country, where the indulgent care of the Marchioneſs left her nothing to wiſh for; and I, who have nothing more to ſay about the gentle Erneſtina, will go and employ myſelf perhaps on the diſtreſſes and embarraſſments of ſome other.

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THE END.